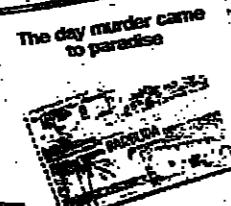


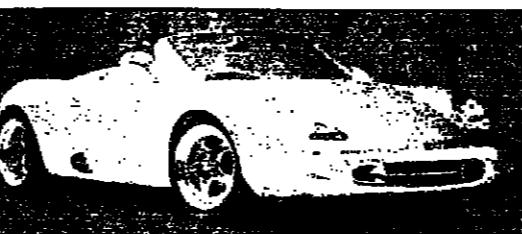


JAN 30 1996

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The day murder
came to paradise

Section Two

Win a
Porsche
Boxster

See page 10 for token

TUESDAY 30 JANUARY 1996

40p
(IR 45p)How men can
learn to relax

Health, Section Two

Major taunts Labour over crime record

Bitter attack on 'hypocrisy'

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

John Major last night stepped up a Tory attack on Opposition "hypocrisy" over crime, in the face of gives from Labour's leaders that the Government had descended "into the gutter" by branding them the "villain's friend".

In exchanges which presaged a prolonged and potentially vicious general election campaign, the two parties conducted a day-long war of words over what both sides see as the key political battleground of law and order.

Hours after Tony Blair, the Labour leader, had accused the Government of "sinking into the gutter", the Prime Minister, undaunted, launched his attack on Labour with a litany of law and order measures brought by his Government and opposed by Labour.

Mr Major's attack, in a speech to the Conservative Political Centre last night, came after furious Commons exchanges earlier in the day. John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, accused ministers of "abuse, innuendo, and slurs", and Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, said Labour's self-projection as tough on crime was "a classic example of hypocrisy".

The Tory battle to regain its traditional territory of law and order showed every sign of being a co-ordinated effort - in the wake of the Cabinet's meeting on political strategy last week - to capitalise on signs that Labour's opinion poll lead on the issue may have been curbed by improved crime figures.

Although Labour remains ahead of the Tories on an issue with which the Conservatives led through most of the 1980s, MORI opinion poll figures suggest that the lead on law and order

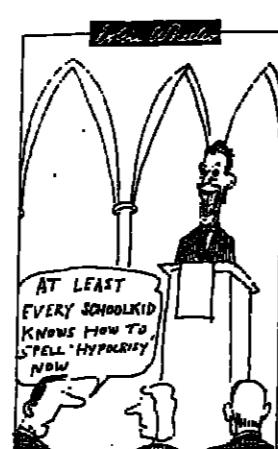
narrowed from around ten to six per cent between September 1994 and July of last year. The Tories are as determined to close the lead as Labour are to widen it.

Ministers are already aiming to put Labour on the spot with their White Paper on minimum sentences for violent and sexual offences, which Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, intends to publish before Easter with a view to introducing a Bill in the Autumn - and quite possibly a second reading before the general election.

Labour has made it clear it will not decide its position until the White Paper has been published, although spokesmen have made it clear that the sentencing proposals do not address the problem that - in the case of sexual crimes - offences have increased while the numbers of those caught and convicted have not.

The Prime Minister mocked Labour for having abstained on the last Criminal Justice Act - which gave the police new rights to stop and search, new court powers to clamp down on drug bands and allowed for drug testing in prisons.

He added: "Day by day



possibly a second reading before the general election.

But Mr Blair, campaigning in Hemsworth, West Yorkshire, declared: "It debases public debate in this country to say that Labour are supporting the criminals. I will not engage in that type of politics. I do not intend to get into the gutter with Mr Major and his Cabinet."

Gordon Brown, who accused Mr Major of taking the political "low road" with his speech, added that the Government was acting as if it was the Opposition, while Labour unveiled new policies. Mr Blair meanwhile amplified Labour's education policy with a speech warning of "Blade Runner" scenario, typified by "ghettos of low opportunity."

Tory fire, page 2

Holiday jet lands safely as pilot dies at controls

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

The captain of a British charter plane with 229 people on board collapsed and died at the controls as the aircraft was descending towards Malaga airport, it was revealed yesterday.

The first officer of the Britannia Airways jet landed the aircraft with the body of the pilot still strapped into the seat next to him.

Roger Attenborough, 54, died from a suspected heart attack while the Boeing 757 flight from Luton was at around 12,000 feet, less than 15 minutes from landing in Spain.

A spokesman for Britannia said flight BY 476A, which had

taken off at 3.15pm on Sunday, proceeded normally. Captain Attenborough did not collapse on the aircraft's controls because it was in the "descent phase" and both pilots were therefore wearing their full harnesses. Most of the passengers were unaware that anything had happened until after the plane landed.

After the plane touched down, resuscitation attempts were made but the pilot was declared dead by the local coroner. The first officer, who has not been named by the airline, had radioed ahead for medical assistance. All first officers are trained to handle flights on their own.

Captain Attenborough, mar-

ried with two grown-up sons, had joined the airline in 1969 and had been a captain for 20 years.

One of his sons, Royd, who is also a pilot, said: "It has come as a complete shock. Dad was fit and well and passed all his six-month medicals with flying colours."

The worst disaster at Heathrow occurred in June 1972 after Stanley Key, the 52-year-old pilot of a Trident carrying 118 people, had a heart attack at the controls following an argument with colleagues. He apparently fell on the controls two minutes after take-off, causing a fatal stall. The aircraft crashed near Staines killing all aboard.

Captain Attenborough, mar-

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

We are not alone. Life almost certainly evolved on Mars and may still thrive deep beneath the planet's surface.

But, scientists believe, it is more likely to be giant white worms than little green men. Later this year, the first of a 10-year-long series of space probes will be launched to the Red Planet to hunt for fossil evidence of life on Mars.

A scientific conference in London will hear this week that life may have begun on Mars at almost the same time as it started here on Earth - some 3.8bn years ago. But scientists believe that as Mars - far more distant from the heat of the Sun - started to freeze, living organisms may have retreated deep into the planet's interior seeking the warmth of volcanic "hot springs" to supply them with the energy to sustain life.

It is even possible that life here on Earth might have started

as a "cross-contamination from Mars", as Professor Paul Davies of Adelaide University will tell the conference, organised by the Ciba foundation.

In 1971, a piece of Mars known as the Nakhla meteorite fell to Earth in Egypt - killing a dog - and more than 500 tons of Martian material falls on to the earth each year. Primitive bacteria could have hitched a ride on rock fragments crossing interplanetary space and seed life on Earth.

According to professor Karl Stetter, of Regensburg University in Germany, these archaic bacteria form the very roots of the tree of life itself - they may be the ancestors of us all.

Similar creatures may have evolved to live on hydrothermal springs on Mars, according to Malcolm Walter of Macquarie University, Australia.

Professor Walter explained

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However, during the Earth's early history, "they built up bacterial reefs - stromatolites - and some of the biggest reefs on Earth today were built by bacteria, not coral", he said. These stromatolites represent the earliest fossil remnants of living creatures on the Earth.

What has changed scientists' views over the 20 years since the Viking mission has been the discovery here on Earth of primitive forms of life which do not need the heat of the sun to sustain themselves but which live

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According to professor Karl Stetter, of Regensburg

news

Education debate: Labour leader condemns 'rigidity' of state system as Heseltine repeats 'hypocrisy' taunts

Blair 'fast-tracking' brings Tory fire

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, pressed ahead with his plans for 'accelerated learning' for bright children last night in the teeth of hostile fire from Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, and some—but not all—teaching unions.

Mr Blair tried to move the education debate on from the issue of selective schools, raised by Harriet Harman's decision to send her son to St Olave's

grammar school. In a speech at Southwark Cathedral, south London, he said Labour was "refusing to go back to the 11-plus but refusing too to make do with uniformity". Outlining plans to "fast-track" able pupils by moving them up a year in subjects they are good at, he said: "It is important that we break down the rigidity in our system that assumes all pupils learn at the same speed in different subjects—the rigid equation of ages and stages."

He went on: "This does not

mean 12-year-olds suddenly becoming sixth-formers, but it does mean bright children being stretched instead of being bored in subjects where they have a particular aptitude."

The speech was seized on by Mr Heseltine in the Commons, who claimed Mr Blair was advocating streaming. Mr Heseltine quoted a speech by the Labour leader last June: "Streaming, with its rigid distribution of children into bright, average and backward camps, is a waste of talent."

Mr Heseltine commented: "This isn't so much a case of accelerated learning – this is accelerated hypocrisy."

Mr Blair's aides said his speech last year distinguished between "streaming", which the party supports. Streaming divides pupils into classes by general ability, while setting divides pupils by ability in a particular subject. "Accelerated learning" was setting, because it applied subject by subject, a spokesman said.

Nigel de Gruchy, leader of one of the main teaching unions, the NASUWT, said fast-tracking was "half-baked".

He added: "The schemes themselves produce huge organisational problems for schools. It can work for some individuals in certain circumstances, but there is no way we can wave a magic wand and pretend that we are going to have some national answer."

But Doug McAvoy, leader of the rival NUT, welcomed the "principle" behind the scheme.

"If a particular youngster shows themselves to be in a particular subject, then they ought to be able to move ahead faster than the others, if that's to their advantage," he said.

Fred Forrester, deputy general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland, the main Scottish teachers' union, pointed out that there had been no streaming or selection in Scotland since the early 1970s.

But all pupils in Scotland are assigned one of three "standard grades" in each subject from age

14. Children are taught in different "sets" if there are enough taking a particular subject.

"It is notable that mathematicians are keener on extending setting than teachers in other subjects," he said.

A spokesman for David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, said a Labour government would not ban streaming. "We are not talking about banning things; we are talking about encouraging this approach which we want to be developed a lot more," he said.

IN BRIEF

Black detective's racism claim

A black police officer who claims he was the victim of racial discrimination by his bosses has accepted an out-of-court settlement said to total £30,000.

Peter Franklin, a detective with more than 15 years' experience, alleged that he suffered discrimination in his annual performance review, affecting both his career and pay. But on the eve of the industrial tribunal hearing, the Metropolitan Police agreed to settle the claim. It is understood that there is no admission of any liability on the part of police.

Yesterday, neither party would confirm or deny the £30,000 figure. A joint statement from Scotland Yard and Mr Franklin's lawyers is expected in about two weeks.

Claire Hood arrest

Detectives investigating the killing of Claire Hood, 15, in Cardiff a year ago arrested Neil Owen, 19, at his home 100 yards from where she lived in the St Mellons area of the city. Claire was raped and then beaten to death and following the discovery of her body police took DNA samples from 2,100 local men.

Girl, 13, found safe

Maxy Sweeten, 13, who disappeared after catching a bus after school last Thursday was found safe by police near her home in Berhill, East Sussex, and reunited with her parents.

Typist's injury award

Kathleen Tovey, 48, of Redditch, Worcestershire, won a record £82,000 damages for repetitive strain injury sustained while working as a typist for the Inland Revenue. A compensation scheme for RSI sufferers has now been negotiated between the IR and the Public Services, Taxation and Commerce Union.

Ronald Cooke

The salary of Professor Ronald Cooke, vice-chancellor of the University of York, is £89,671, including allowances. The figure of £105,000 given in yesterday's *Independent* included pension contributions.

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BACK ISSUES

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Life in the fast track: school tries to offer children a culture in which they can participate and be challenged in specific areas

JOJO MOYES

The extent to which Grove Junior School is an anomaly, is best demonstrated by the first two things visitors will see.

One is the heavy steel shutters that pull down over every door and window; testament to the most recent riots and a local burglary epidemic that is "going through the roof".

The other is a photocopied letter pinned to the notice-board, dated October 1995, from a passenger on a local bus who says he has just watched three pupils in succession give up their seats to adults.

"I would like to thank you and congratulate you for the example of good behaviour and courtesy shown by your pupils," it says.

Grove Junior, as Tony Blair has apparently noticed, is no ordinary inner city local authority school. Four of its 11-year-old pupils are taking GCSE while five have gone on to Oxford and Cambridge. Every week a hundred of its 730 pupils voluntarily attend the Children's University on Saturdays, some of them travelling across Birmingham to do so.

Not had for one of the most economically deprived areas of the midlands. Especially when many of its pupils are those who have already been expelled from other schools.

On entering the school buildings - set one on each side of a run down red brick terraced street - it is clear that Grove Junior refused to be a product of its environment. The walls are lined with paintings and poetry, the atmosphere is warm and welcoming and pupils and teachers talk animatedly in the corridors.

"The thing everybody notices about this school is that we have developed a culture in which children can actively participate. They know they are listened to," said Dr David Winkley, the school's headmaster for twenty years.

"Where they come from is irrelevant. All we're doing is identifying talent and giving children the confidence and self belief to ensure they use it."

It is this, in particular, the school's practice of providing "fast track" teaching for children who show aptitude for certain subjects, that has most attracted Tony Blair's attention.

Dr Winkley is keen to emphasise that "fast tracking" and its remedial opposite "learning support groups" are restricted only to subjects.

"We are not streaming children and taking them away from their peers for the whole of the day, but offering children with the talent in specific areas the chance to challenge themselves."

"We've got support groups and fast track yes, but they're in a context in which the chil-

dren can feel positive about themselves," Dr Winkley added.

And many of these children have good reason not to. Some, he said, had severe behavioural difficulties having been sexually abused or experienced violence at home.

"They're very difficult children with an awful lot of problems," he said. "To help them, the school has employed the first trained counsellor in a junior school to give the children intensive support.

The positive attitude of the other pupils, he says, tended to rub off on them eventually. "It's infectious," he said.

Grove Junior was not always such an education paragon. Twenty years ago, when Dr Winkley took it on, it had suffered "all sorts of problems".

"I don't think anyone else wanted the job," he says modestly.

"He turned it around," said one member of staff. "This is the worst bit of Handsworth but it's a lovely atmosphere in here, especially considering the back-

grounds of some of the kids."

This is reiterated by the children themselves, most of whom come from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Shantell Simpson, 11, said she looked forward to coming to school.

"The other kids are friendly and the staff are nice," she said. She had been moved into fast track maths which was good, she said. It isn't her favourite subject, though.

"That's English," she said. "We're doing philosophy and how to construct an argument."

THE UNITED NATIONS: FIFTY YEARS OLD

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Patient released to attack again

A violent schizophrenic indecently assaulted two women pensioners after being released into the community less than a year after a court ordered he should be held indefinitely in a psychiatric hospital.

Nelson Anya, 37, described as a danger to the public in general and women in particular, was sent to a secure psychiatric unit by an Old Bailey judge yesterday again with instructions he must be held "without limit of time".

Judge Beaumont warned: "It goes without saying, in view of what happened before, that the public expect great care to be taken. He is going to a regional secure unit and will stay there until he is better and he will not be allowed into the community until a mental health review tribunal has considered his case."

Anya admitted indecently assaulting the women, one 65, the other 70, near or inside their homes in north-west London on two separate occasions.

"They were terrifying sexual attacks on defenceless ladies," the judge said.

At the time of both offences, Anya had failed to attend outpatient hospital appointments and take his medication, the court was told.

In September 1991, Anya had been detained under the Mental Health Act with a Section 41 restriction that he should be held indefinitely. However, he was released in July of the following year. Some time later he complained of hallucinations and was given medication which kept him stable until he began missing the hospital appointments.

Gerry Adams could be allowed to attend a Sinn Fein rally in Trafalgar Square, following the decision by the Government to lift the 23-year-old ban on Northern Ireland protest meetings at the world-famous landmark, writes Colin Brown.

The ban was imposed in 1972, in the wake of the Aldershot bombings, amid fears that demonstrations at Trafalgar Square by IRA supporters would lead to violence in the peace process.

Mrs Bottomley said organisations would still have to get permission from the Metropolitan Police for any rallies. The IRA and Loyalist paramilitary organisations would not be allowed to use the square to stage demonstrations as they are still banned organisations.

Mrs Bottomley said: "My department will continue to apply the rules which restrict all demonstrations on Trafalgar Square to weekends, and will continue to consider each application on its merits."

Irish peace: Fresh moves to defuse election row

Trimble 'ready to talk with Sinn Fein'

COLIN BROWN and DAVID McNUTTRICK

for the nationalist rejection of the proposed elections.

John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, also tried to take the heat out of the row, which threatened to sour relations between London and Dublin after Dick Spring, the Irish Foreign Secretary, accused Mr Major of trying to "divide and rule".

Mr Bruton said he hoped the meeting on Thursday in London between Mr Spring and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, would "get the peace process back on track from which it should never have been diverted".

The Taoiseach replied to a letter from Mr Major at the weekend urging the Prime Minister to focus on the Mitchell commission conclusions that the IRA would not decommission arms before all-party talks began.

He did not reject the idea of elections in Northern Ireland to appoint the negotiating teams, and does not understand the reason.

Bottomley lifts Ulster protest ban

Trafalgar Square has witnessed many demonstrations in the meantime, from the Ban the Bomb protests to the campaign against the Poll Tax, which ended in violence.

Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, yesterday announced she was lifting the ban. It was seen as a confidence-building measure to underline the Government's commitment to the peace process.

Mrs Bottomley said: "We have to ask what power companies have been doing with all the money they have earned in recent times. If they have to turn the voltage down or cut people off, then public confidence will disappear completely."

Grid promise to consumers: 'No power cuts'

MARY FAGAN and PETER VICTOR

The National Grid last night promised consumers: "There will be no power cuts tonight or in the foreseeable future."

A grid spokesman rejected what he called "media scare stories" and said that, barring unforeseen circumstances – "like a jumbo jet coming down on power lines or an act of terrorism" – there was no likelihood of power cuts.

The spokesman added: "We have worked with the regional electricity companies and generators and they have co-operated very well. We have enough power and enough reserves."

Electricity generators sought to dispel growing alarm over the possibility of power cuts during a spate of freezing weather.

Record demand caused by the freezing weather sweeping across Britain had fuelled fears that consumers might suffer electricity blackouts.

fire

IN BRIEF
Black detective
racism claim

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news

Opera star in boycott threat

Opera star Bryn Terfel yesterday threatened to boycott Wales in the row over the Millennium Commission's decision not to fund the new Cardiff Bay opera house.

Welsh-born Mr Terfel had been booked to open the controversial new building on St David's Day in the year 2000 by singing the title role in Wagner's "The Flying Dutchman".

But the failure of the opera house bid and pressure from other prestigious opera houses to sing with them has forced him to put the plans on one side.

It means his current project – singing the part of Nick Shadow in a new Welsh National Opera production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* due to open in February – could well be his last for the company.

Mr Terfel confirmed his calendar was fully booked for the next seven years and that the Welsh National Opera now had no place in it.

"I'm very disappointed," he said, but added that, without the new opera house, the WNO simply did not have the theatre facilities to make it worth his while singing with them.

The singer's outspoken condemnation of the Millennium Commission's decision will further fuel the debate which has raged in the music world since Heritage Secretary Virginia Bottomley announced its rejection last month.

Supporters of the landmark project had been seeking around £50m for a permanent home for the company, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

In an outspoken interview for BBC Wales, Mr Terfel admitted he would now rather go to America, Europe or Covent Garden to take on some of the demanding Wagnerian roles.

The singer added: "The Met said that if plans for the new Welsh opera house don't come through, then we have something for you instead. So what am I supposed to do?"

The fastest rising singing success for decades, Mr Terfel, a farmer's son from Snowdonia, has already performed in most of the world's opera houses to huge acclaim.



Pay back: Ron Lipsius leaving the High Court with his wife, Sally. Photograph: Reuter

King's Cross fire: Burns victim is awarded a record £650,000 but directs bitter attack on London Transport

'There has been no remorse, no goodwill. The survivors were thrown to legal sharks'

STEVE BOGGAN

A musician whose career was blighted by injuries suffered in the 1987 King's Cross fire was awarded £650,000 agreed damages at the High Court yesterday.

Ron Lipsius, who has undergone 18 operations to repair his burnt hands, said he was disappointed with the settlement – he had claimed more than £1m – and he launched a bitter attack on London Transport.

"I hate them," he said. "I think they are a wicked organisation. Their cumulative incompetence caused hell on earth on November 18 1987. They've shown no remorse. They have no goodwill. People were maimed and killed, and they threw the survivors to the legal sharks."

The award is the highest so far out of more than 80 claims, although three are still outstanding. It reflects Mrs Lipsius's loss of future earnings from an anticipated career writing advertising jingles.

Mr Lipsius, 39, of Hammersmith, west London, earned a first-class music degree from New York City, where he was born, and he had hoped to spend his life in the music business, playing guitar and keyboards. Among witnesses who would have testified to his skill, had the case gone ahead, was Brian May, lead guitarist with the pop group Queen.

On the night of the blaze, Mr Lipsius was travelling with a friend's mother, who died. His hands were severely damaged when he lifted them to protect



Damage done: Ron Lipsius recovering in hospital 24 hours after receiving his injuries in the fire; and (right) the burned out underground station at King's Cross

his face as a fireball swept through the underground station ticket hall, where many of the 31 who died were overcome by flames and smoke.

As a regular user of the station, he was able to find a way out of the worst of the blaze before being rescued by firemen.

During his recovery at University College Hospital, London, Mr Lipsius endured a number of extremely painful operations which could only be carried out without anaesthetic. They involved cutting the sides of his fingers to remove dead tissue.

Such was the resulting pain that for eight weeks he required strong painkillers before daily physiotherapy sessions.

The court was told that he is still suffering from post-traumatic stress and depression, and his hands bleed when he tries to play the guitar.

His counsel, Colin Mackay QC, said the "skillful and necessarily aggressive" treatment Mr Lipsius was given enabled him to use his hands to a certain degree, but they had not been restored enough to enable him to play his guitar.

"His hope, before the fire, was not that he was going to be the next Eric Clapton," said Mr Mackay. "But that he would enter the world of jingles.

"What my client went through was like a vision of hell ... He left his companion and felt guilty he had not been able to save her. Mr Lipsius survived to be described as the worst of the King's Cross victims in terms of burns.

"He has hands that he can use for many of the purposes of

life but the supreme tragedy is he wanted more than that. He wanted a career in music.

"He simply cannot play the guitar. He has tried, and on one occasion his hands started to bleed. The skin of his hands is simply too delicate, his joints simply too imperfect."

Patrick Allen, Mr Lipsius's solicitor, said Professor Gus McGrouther, Mr Lipsius's surgeon, said 10 more operations were necessary, something London Transport contested.

Mr Justice Butterfield said Mr Lipsius had demonstrated great bravery but that no amount of money could compensate him for the devastating consequences of the fire.

"His recovery, partial and incomplete as it is, is quite plainly a tribute to the skill of the doctors who treated him, the support of his family and, above all, the dogged determination of Mr Lipsius himself."

After the hearing, Mr Lipsius said: "I am disappointed. I was hoping for a lot more, but it's a risky business and you just have to settle for less or go through an incredible amount of stress – and maybe get less."

He said the money would be used to build a recording studio so he could continue trying to work as a musician.

London Transport said it was "pleased" the case had been settled and it expressed its sympathy for all the victims and their families.

Awards recognise bravery

The payout to Ron Lipsius is the largest of 84 cases settled so far at a cost to London Transport of more than £4m, writes Steve Boggan.

Until yesterday, the highest awards had been made for the suffering of two men – a fireman and a ticket collector – for the post-traumatic stress they still endure after feats of selfless bravery.

Mahendra Parmar, 46, the ticket collector, was awarded

£375,616 in November 1994 after having his health ruined in the aftermath of the fire.

Despite terrifying conditions,

Mr Parmar, from Milton Keynes, repeatedly led passengers out of danger and returned to save more. But after the disaster, he became withdrawn and suffered a series of health problems that resulted in him needing sticks to walk. He has to be cared for to a high degree by his wife, Sumitra.

The next highest award was made to Paul Hale, 47, of Sheerness, Kent, who repeatedly entered the smoke-filled station to pull out survivors and bodies. Making the award, Mr Justice Orton said: "He is probably one of the most courageous men I have ever had, or shall have, the privilege of meeting."

The highest collective award, to the widow and children of one of the victims, Christopher Roome, amounted to £423,089.

Obsession that turns life into nightmare for victims

WILL BENNETT

The obsessive nature of the Cambridge stalker, who followed his victim for four months before raping her in her home, would be familiar to thousands of frightened women.

When rejected or ignored stalkers become ever more obsessive and determined, turning the lives of their victims into a nightmare.

The stalking compulsion is known by psychiatrists as erotomania. The basic delusion is that the pursuer is either loved intensely by their quarry or would be if they only knew each other. Some are harmless but many are not.

John Hinckley shot and wounded President Ronald Reagan to try to impress actress Jodie Foster, for whom he had formed an obsessive attraction.

Police are under no illusions that Chuck, the Cambridgeshire stalker, must be caught. Detective Superintendent Tony Rogers, the officer leading the inquiry, said yesterday: "This man is clearly extremely dan-

gerous and I believe it is possible this may not be the first time he has victimised and harmed a woman. Moreover, I cannot rule out the possibility that he may rape again."

The stalker first saw the woman, a mother in her thirties, in a local hotel where she was having a cup of coffee last September. She rejected his chat-up attempt and not unnaturally thought that that would be the end of the matter.

He has since veered from threatening behaviour, once punching her, to trying to win her approval. On one occasion he pulled up behind her and offered to help within moments of her car breaking down.

The sense of threat that she felt was increased by the fact that she sometimes saw him even when he was not following her. Detective Superintendent Rogers said: "It is not the time now to have an inquiry into our methods. We took the necessary security measures to try to protect her."

Asked why detectives had not tailed the woman to try to trap the stalker, police said she had not told them she was being followed until after she was punched just before Christmas.

Many celebrities are harassed by stalkers. Earlier this month Robert Dewey Hoskins was convicted of making "terrorist threats" to the pop singer Mad-

eline. He broke into her Hollywood estate twice, left love letters in her letterbox and threatened to "slice her throat from ear to ear".

Other public figures stalked in recent years include members of the royal family, tennis players Monica Seles and Steffi Graf, supermodel Naomi Campbell, singer Olivia Newton-John, and the actress Helena Bonham-Carter.

The questions which Cambridgeshire police now have to address are whether they provided enough protection for the rape victim and whether they could have followed her to catch the stalker.

Detective Superintendent Rogers said: "It is not the time now to have an inquiry into our methods. We took the necessary security measures to try to protect her."

Asked why detectives had not tailed the woman to try to trap the stalker, police said she had not told them she was being followed until after she was punched just before Christmas.

Leading article, page 14

EU racism watchdog demands Internet neo-Nazi censorship

ANDREW BROWN

An EU committee on racism has demanded that the Internet be censored to prevent the incitement of racial hatred. The Union's Consultative Committee on Racism and Xenophobia, based in Paris, yesterday urged all member states to follow the example of Germany, which has been attempting to censor racist and pornographic messages in cyberspace.

The latest scandal was caused by Ernst Zündel, a German neo-Nazi, based in Canada, who has hired space on a computer in California to promote his views. This space, known as a web site, greets visitors with the statement:

4 politics

Hospital to get £50m injection of private cash

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

A £50m private finance redevelopment of St James's Hospital in Leeds was given the go-ahead yesterday providing it with a new 166-bed paediatric wing, but also its first private beds for paying patients.

The scheme is the biggest NHS contract let so far under the Government's private finance initiative. It includes a "medipark" to attract pharmaceutical, bio-technology and equipment manufacturers, a 900-place car park which will help raise revenue, and an 80-bed patient "hotel" to which recuperating patients may be transferred.

The development is due to be followed by a string of other privately financed hospitals worth a potential £1bn, including the £35m 150-bed development at Chesham and Amersham announced by Kenneth in the Budget. They include a £90m rebuild at the Swindon and Marlborough Trust and a £100m project to provide a complete new district general hospital on a green-field site at Norwich.

John Horam, the junior health minister, claimed the

initiative was "changing the face of hospitals up and down the country" by providing up-to-date facilities in place of ageing NHS buildings. All the clinical services of doctors and nurses would continue to be provided by the NHS, he added.

Harriet Harman, Labour's health spokeswoman, countered that the initiative was privatising the NHS, leaving the service "in hock" to the private companies who would build, own and run the buildings.

The new wing at Jimmy's is due for completion at the end of 1988 and will occupy a 13.5 acre site next to the hospital. The project is being run by a subsidiary of Medipark Ltd of which the leading members are Charterhouse Bank and John Laing Construction.

The 80-bed hotel, in which the NHS will "rent" beds as and when it needs them, will include a 35-bed private unit. It will be run by a private provider who has yet to be identified but who will pay a royalty to the hospital based on the number of patients treated.

A trust spokesman said the aim was to encourage hospital consultants who now operate privately elsewhere to use the

facilities at Jimmy's - cutting their travelling time, making them more available to the NHS and providing the trust with extra revenue.

The trust claimed yesterday that private-sector involvement, including innovations in design and running costs, made the scheme £5m cheaper to build and £10m cheaper overall than its publicly-funded equivalent.

John Greetham, chairman of the Northern and Yorkshire region of the NHS, who initiated the project when chairman of Jimmy's, said: "The PFI is not a way of privatising the NHS. Far from it. The PFI actually protects the NHS's fundamental principle - providing health care based on clinical need free at the point of delivery - by finding ways of making quality health care more affordable."

Four hundred jobs will be involved in the construction phase of what is essentially a rationalisation of existing, scattered, paediatric services. It also releases part of the existing hospital for mental health care.

Mr Horam also announced a £20m scheme to provide car parking and office accommodation at the Royal Berkshire and Battle Trust in Reading.

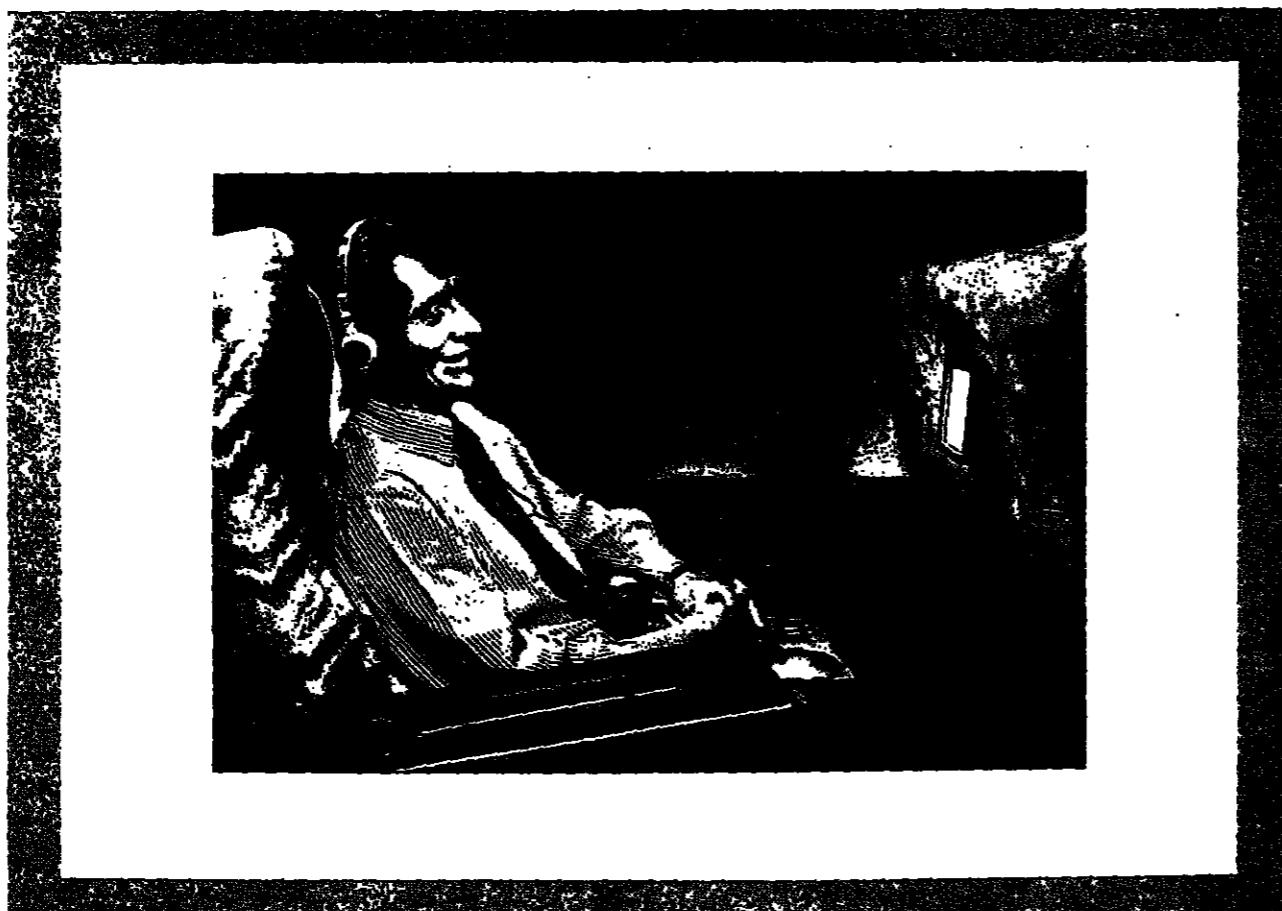
Euthanasia law: Woman facing slow death calls for 'wider choice for dying'



Mercy plea: Annie Lindsell, 45, (in wheelchair), a motor neurone disease sufferer, outside the Commons yesterday where she attended a seminar calling on MPs to support 'a wider choice for the dying' by relaxing the law on euthanasia. She faced 'a life where I'll be completely paralysed, unable to take care of my most intimate personal needs' and said her main barrier to a dignified death was the current law

Photograph: John Voo

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Emirates

Inquiry into 'Gulf syndrome'

Defence chiefs are today expected to announce moves to step up investigations into so-called Gulf war syndrome.

After intense cross-party pressure, ministers are believed to come down in favour of an inquiry into deformities among children born to Gulf veterans.

More than 70 former service personnel claim there could be a link between the cocktail of vaccinations and anti-nerve agents they took to protect themselves against chemical and biological attack and deformities in their offspring. Some have been born with limb defects, heart deformities and some have had vital organs missing.

The expected move follows a top-level meeting between defence chiefs and a team of medical specialists last week.

Labour defence spokesman Dr John Reid said: "A partial inquiry into any single aspect of the problem will be welcome, but only as a first step towards the full inquiry that our veterans deserve. For too long the Government has tried to ignore this issue. It looks as though it has now found the strength of professional and medical opinion too great to resist."

Council taxes 'set to rocket'

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

Government for the increases in council tax in a full-scale Commons debate tomorrow. Mr Dobson said it was the equivalent of an increase of a half-penny in the pound on the basic rate of income tax. "It will nearly wipe out the 1p cut in income tax given to the taxpayers in the Budget. What they give with one hand, they steal back with the other," he said.

Higher bills are due to drop through letter boxes shortly before the May local elections. Ministers are hoping to pin the blame on Labour-controlled councils, and will claim it represents the higher spending voters can expect under Labour.



Warning: Frank Dobson

Labour attacks mean-minded Tories over homeless 'Bedsit hostels' incur Gummer's wrath

Councils are to be given new powers to close down benefit hostels and bedsit blocks if they cause a nuisance or annoyance to the neighbourhood.

The move, announced by John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, will be particularly welcome in seaside towns, he said, where once elegant hotels have become troublesome eyesores.

In many resorts former hotels and guest houses had become what are sometimes called "benefit hostels".

"Where these are badly managed, or where there are simply too many of them, there is often considerable nuisance and sometimes real danger. Such wholesale changes can alter the whole character of an area and damage the tourism industry, upon which many such seaside towns exist."

Speaking during the Second Reading of the Housing Bill, Mr Gummer promised amendments to enable councils to close down problem "houses in multiple occupation", without compensation. Councils will also be given powers to prevent new HMOs opening.

Much of the acrimonious debate on the Bill centred on its impact on the homeless. Frank Dobson, Labour's environment spokesman, said it was a "nasty, mean-spirited" measure which attacked homeless people. Mr Gummer

meanwhile, maintained it was about treating everyone on the housing waiting list equally.

Responding to a newspaper advertisement from housing charities the Secretary of State said it was not a fair system to have several queues. "Everyone should be lined up together."

The Bill proposes a single waiting list route into local authority and housing association homes. Families and the vulnerable would be given a minimum of one year's accommodation. But Mr Gummer

Dobson who said the Bill combined "Tory mean-mindedness and a titch to the right". Instead of helping the victims of their policies, the Government was blaming them. "Faced with enormous queues for council and housing association homes, the Government isn't trying to shorten the queues by building more homes. Instead they propose just to rearrange the queue and hope that in the process the people affected will start blaming one another and that it might also distract attention from the Tories' record."

Instead of finding families somewhere decent to live, the Government was proposing to force them to live in "perpetual insecurity", Mr Dobson said.

He held up as the epitome of Tory policy the Clarendon Court Hotel in Westminster, claiming it was occupied by 158 families living in "squalor".

"But the landlords won't be living in squalor. They're getting £750,000 a year - £14,000 a week - of taxpayers' money."

He said the hotel was infested by cockroaches and there were only six electric cooking rings shared by residents of 48 bedsitting rooms. "This Housing Bill doesn't propose to do anything to improve the living conditions of these families, nor does it propose anything to help them get somewhere better to live. Quite the reverse - it's likely to force them to stay there longer."

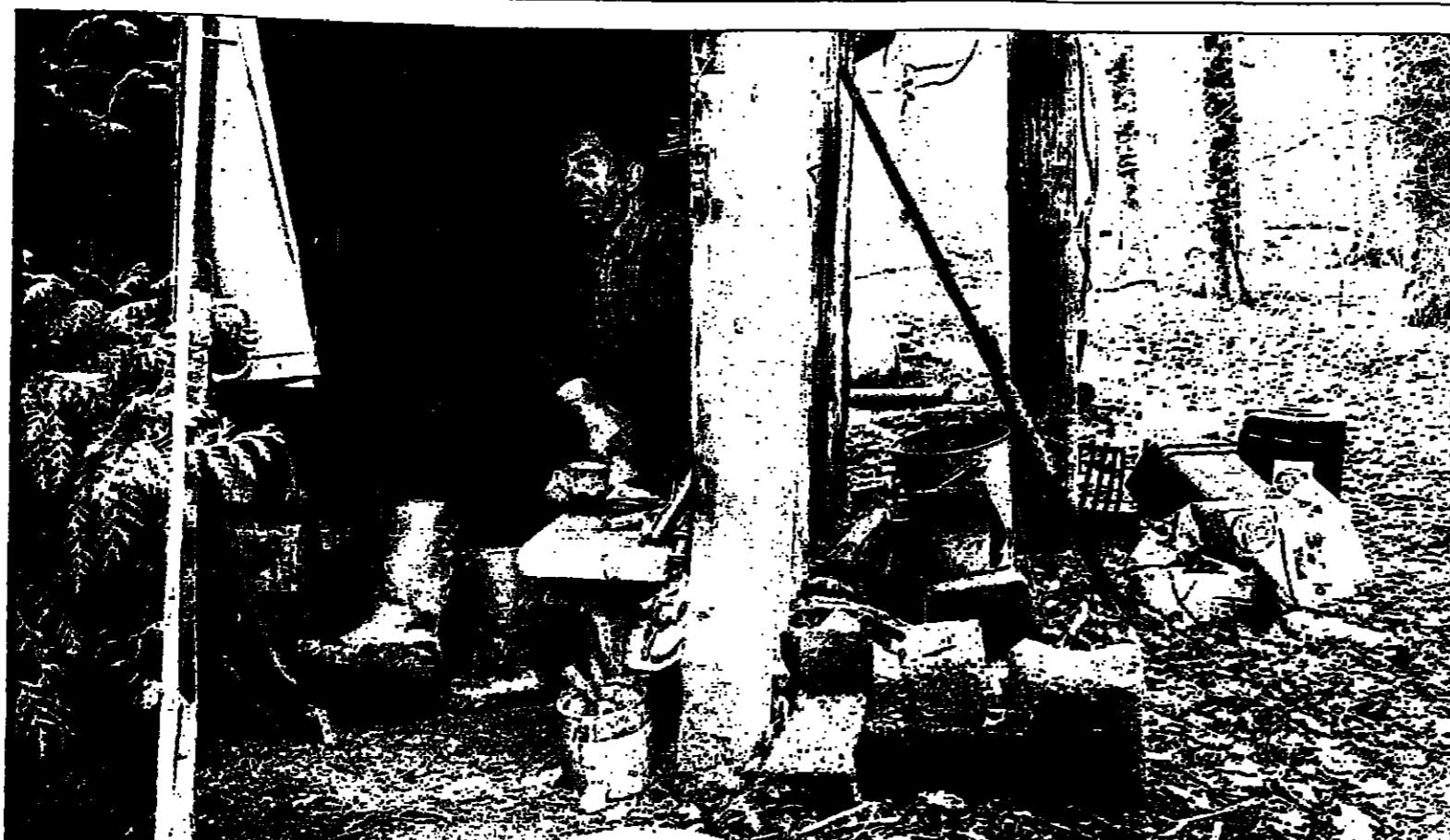
Inside Parliament

Stephen Goodwin

said others might actually be living in far worse conditions.

This Bill ensures people are judged according to their needs," he insisted. "To each according to his need - or is this another thing that the Labour party have thrown out?"

Other provisions give more housing association tenants the right to buy, leaseholders greater protection, and council tenants a chance to vote for new social landlords able to use private money for improvements. But little of this impressed Mr



Digging in: Forest of Dean free miners such as Gilbert Kerr see licences to mine as a violation of their birthright. Photograph: Jeffrey Wilkinson

Forest miners fight for right to stay free

MICHAEL PRESTAGE

For 700 years the free miners of the Forest of Dean have mined coal without such bureaucratic niceties as planning permission, but now history is set to be overturned and their future is in the balance.

The fiercely independent miners will not see their birthright eroded without a fight. It was the skills of their forefathers in tunnelling under castle fortifications that brought them the right to mine without hindrance or encumbrance anywhere in the Forest of Dean, the area of land between the Rivers Severn and Wye.

Gerald Haynes owns one of only two full-time mines remaining. He has been told he needs planning permission to continue his mine at Haynes Bailey, Cannop, where he travels 200 metres underground to hack out 400 tonnes of coal a year in a one-man operation.

Like all the free miners, Mr

Haynes was born in the hundred of St Briavels and worked a year and a day underground in a mine. There are still a couple of hundred free miners surviving but few now mine.

He said: "It seems that the authorities want to get rid of the free miners. Now there are only a few left mining the impression is that we are an anomaly they want to see removed."

Mr Haynes said it had always been accepted that free miners did not need planning permission. But consent may prove difficult to obtain in what is an environmentally sensitive area.

"All I want is to be able to carry on as I have done for 20 years. Most of the coal goes into local homes."

Donald Johns, chairman of the Forest of Dean Free Miners' Association, said the whole issue was complicated, but he was critical of the new Coal Authority for insisting on planning permission.

He said: "At stake is an im-

portant tradition for this area. We are not just looking at today but for the next 50 years. We can't let our rights be eroded."

Paul Marland, the MP for Gloucestershire West, has backed the miners' fight. "We must ensure that the free miners and their ancient rights are protected and preserved."

Roy Piggott, the Forest's minerals estate manager - known as the deputy gaveler - said free miners needed planning permission. "You get this folklore, but the rule of law is the rule of law. There is a tendency to believe the free mining is the Oxford Dictionary sense of free, and it isn't."

He said there was still confusion over whether all free miners required a licence. A spokesman for the Coal Authority admitted the whole issue was complex and governed by arcane regulations.

The authority and the deputy gaveler said they were in talks to try and find a compromise.

Universities threaten £300 fee for freshers

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Universities are threatening to charge freshers £300 per head next year unless government cuts are reversed.

Vice-chancellors will decide on Friday whether to impose the one-off levy on new students from September 1997. They may also decide to boycott inspections of their teaching quality.

The fee, which would not be charged to students on full grants, could affect 140,000 students and would raise up to £50m. Universities face cuts of 9.4 per cent over three years, with capital spending reduced by 50 per cent. They say they will take action unless this year's budget eases their plight.

More than 100 vice-chancellors will discuss the plan, along with a further measure which could mean a boycott of quality inspections in universities. This second plan could lead to financial sanctions by government funding agencies.

Diana Warwick, chief executive of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVC), said yesterday that action would only be taken

with reluctance. "What is the point of delivering second class tuition to students? Universities need adequate funding to maintain quality," she said.

Vice-chancellors have been increasingly vocal in their protests against spending restrictions. The proportion of 18-year-olds going to university has risen in the past decade from one in five to almost one in three, but the higher education budget has failed to keep pace.

Other proposals which will be tabled at Friday's meeting will include the introduction of top-up fees which would vary from university to university. Some vice-chancellors have also threatened to cut student numbers, but this has been rejected because it would lead to funding being reduced even further.

The CVC believes the only long-term solution to the universities' funding problems would be a system by which all students repay a proportion of their fees after graduation.

Such a system has already been introduced in Australia and does not appear to have put off potential students. However, despite continued political pressure for such a move neither of the main political parties has so far been prepared to make a commitment to it.

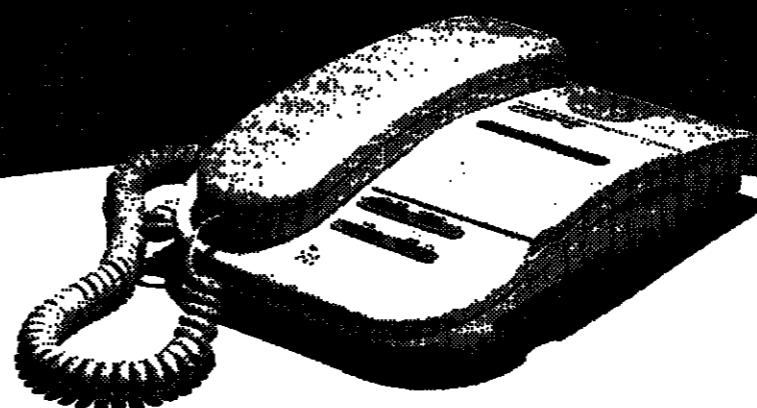
Last year the National Union of Students (NUS) failed to persuade its members to press for a system like the Australian one, which could mean much more generous funding for universities. It will debate the issue again at its conference this spring.

However, a number of student groups are opposed. Yesterday they launched a Campaign for Free Education, whose members will stand for executive positions in NUS. Among its members is Clive Lewis, the union's vice-president for education. "Students are already living in desperate hardship. Tuition fees amount to a tax on education," he said.



Diana Warwick: 'Reluctant' move to counter cuts

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news

Park life is given £50m injection

CLARE GARNER

Britain's urban parks are set to receive a £50m facelift from the Heritage Lottery Fund, it was announced yesterday.

Following a series of lottery handouts to allegedly élitist institutions, the fund has turned its attention to a subject close to the hearts of the estimated 8 million people who visit a park each day.

The Urban Parks Programme plans to restore and rejuvenate historic open spaces in towns and cities throughout the country over the next three years. Launching the scheme in Sheffield's Weston Park, fund chairman Lord Rothschild invited applications from parks, gardens, town squares, town moors, seaside promenades and historic cemeteries, and said funding decisions were expected to be announced by March next year.

A recent report by Comedia/Demos, on which the programme was partly based, estimated that more than 40 per cent of the population use parks for recreation, fun and fresh air on a regular basis. Geoff Mulgan, director of Demos, said yes-

terday: "We're delighted they have taken on an issue which to most of the policy-makers in London seems mundane but is in fact where life is lived."

"Whereas so many of the visible beneficiaries of lottery money have been élitist and exclusive institutions, there is none less so than the public park. That's why, in terms of value for money and improving the quality of life there's more bang for the buck available in the parks than almost anywhere else at the moment."

In the 19th century, Britain pioneered an entirely new model for public parks, imitated around the world. Mr Mulgan hopes the new programme will prove equally innovative. Parks should be "showcases for biodiversity" and cater for sports ranging from American football to Tai Chi, he said.

Clare Hartwell, the Victorian Society's northern architectural adviser, had one reservation. "I think it is quite likely that some parks in the north haven't even been identified yet," she said. "In London there is extremely good knowledge of the history of the park and obviously those parks with

a good body of research will be the first to attract money. It's going to be more difficult to target the parks which are most in need of financial help."

Britain has the largest proportion of recreational green



Open space: Aston Park, Birmingham, one of the Victorian parks expected to be considered for Heritage Fund awards. Photograph: Russell Sach

space in urban areas of any comparable country. In a recent Mori poll, commissioned by the fund, 65 per cent of the population nominated inner-city parks as the aspect of heritage they felt was most important to

preserve, and 74 per cent thought that it was "very important" to make local parks cleaner and safer for children.

Sheffield is just one city which would benefit from lottery money. "We've a popula-

tion of over half a million, making at least three million visits a year to Sheffield's parks," said Elizabeth Thring, director of recreation and amenities for the city council.

"Our Victorian forefathers

were very generous in providing wonderful parks which became the lungs of the city. However, the maintenance paid into parks has gone down 50 per cent in real terms over the last three years."

NHS dentists hardest to find in South

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

One in three people say they are having trouble in finding an NHS dentist, says a survey which highlights a dental service in crisis despite Government denial that this is the case.

The situation is worst in the South-east with over half (52 per cent) of respondents saying they faced problems. In East Anglia, which includes the Prime Minister's own constituency of Huntingdon, the figure was 48 per cent, the second highest in the country.

Problems were less severe further north. In Scotland, only 16 per cent of respondents said finding an NHS dentist was a problem.

The British Dental Association, which commissioned the survey, is calling on the Government to increase funding for NHS dentistry "as a matter of urgency". There is a "serious lack" of dental treatment across the country, the association said, and it is urging the public to write to their local MPs to complain about the disintegration of the NHS dental service.

The relationship between the Government and dentists is at an all time low after years of dispute over fees. In 1992 a 7 per cent cut was imposed after dentists did more work than the Government had budgeted for.

As a result almost a million NHS patients have been "deregistered" by disillusioned dentists in recent years. Some are refusing new NHS patients and others restricting their new intake to pregnant women and children. Abandoned patients have to find a new NHS dentist, seek private treatment or join an insurance scheme.

Dr Joe Rich, of the BDA, said yesterday: "We have great sympathy for members of the public trying to find an NHS dentist. Chronic underfunding by this Government has forced many dentists out of the NHS. The BDA will continue to fight for the preservation of NHS dentistry."

A 10 per cent increase in funding for health service dentistry in each of the next five years was needed to improve access to dental treatment for NHS patients, according to the BDA.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said yesterday that the Government was committed to the NHS dental service and that the number of NHS dentists was higher than four years ago at almost 16,000, up 525 on figures for June 1992. The number of patients registered was 27.4 million, up 100,000 on 1992.

A regional breakdown of people finding it difficult to locate an NHS dentist was as follows: North, 19 per cent; Yorkshire and Humberside, 21 per cent; East Midlands, 26 per cent; East Anglia, 48 per cent; South-east, 52 per cent; London, 33 per cent; South-west, 47 per cent; Wales, 44 per cent; West Midlands, 39 per cent; North-west, 27 per cent; and Scotland, 16 per cent.

The survey was conducted by telephone among a sample of 1,024 respondents earlier this month.

Business as usual for 'dedicated' jackpot winners



Winners: Christine Winter, Philomena Kelly, Maria Martinez and Margie West

Chinese prepare to gamble on scratchcard success

When officials at China's Social Welfare Lottery Committee realised just over a year ago that sales of lottery tickets had hit a plateau, they decided to open up China's wild west to the joys of the game. An "experiment" was held in Xinjiang province's Manas county, home to 120,000 nomads. It was something of a hit; within days, 1.1 million lottery tickets had been sold.

Buoyed by success, the officials aggressively started marketing bigger games across China, with higher-value prizes ranging from bags of cement to washing machines. In a secret location near Peking, a

where gambling is supposedly illegal, it did not take long to pay off. By the end of the year total sales had soared to 5.5bn yuan (£450m), more than twice that for 1994. Officials readily admitted that, if only they could have printed more tickets, sales would have been much higher.

Next month will see the Chinese government's biggest experiment yet in the lottery business, with the launch of new scratchcard games in which Chinese punters buying the 2 yuan (14p) tickets will be able to win large cash prizes. At a secret location near Peking, a

Sino-French-Malaysian joint venture company is printing millions of lottery cards for the "Constellation" and "Land Battle Chase" games, which will start selling in the run-up to Chinese New Year in mid-February.

Prizes worth up to 100,000 yuan (£8,300) will be on offer, including apartments and cars, but an official at the lottery committee said there would also be a cash option. Cash prizes would be "more flexible", he said. "Some people do not like the articles, they already have them. They prefer cash."

In theory, China has strict

anti-gambling laws. In practice, that does not always matter. At the Peking Racing Track, for instance, betting is officially described as "guessing" about which horse may win. Similarly, the government has overlooked any inconsistency in state lotteries. Under the government's regulations, 55 per cent of ticket revenues must be

spent on prizes, 15 per cent goes on printing and distribution, and 30 per cent funds on welfare institutions, including old people's homes and mental asylums.

Chinese lottery tickets were simple cards with perforated windows, which tear back to reveal a symbol. The scratchcards will be far more sophisticated - and far more fraud-proof. The joint venture is 37 per cent owned by the French state lottery company, Française des Jeux, which has imported state-of-the-art machines to make the tickets.

Outside Peking's Landao de-

partment store the Chaoyang District Civil Affairs Social Welfare Bureau had two "campaigns" running this week to encourage ticket sales. For 2 years one had the chance of winning a motorcycle, Panasonic TV/floor or microwave oven. One man, Mr Hu, bought five tickets to "try my luck" and won a monkey toy. "It is fun. Suppose I win a colour TV?" said another man from Hebei province.

The scratchcards will be launched in the south of China and, significantly, not in Peking, just in case anything goes awry.

The government is wary of sparking lottery mania. "They do not want to go too fast," said one expert. "They do not know what will be the impact on the economy, especially in the countryside." In some cases, peasants have sold their clothes to raise funds to buy tickets; some of the poorest provinces, such as Shaanxi and Guizhou, have been among the biggest ticket purchasers. The government also wants to keep strict control - in one province last autumn there was a riot when local cadres raised ticket prices without increasing prizes.

Jammed controls 'caused air crash'

A Chinook helicopter pilot told an inquiry that he did not accept the findings of an RAF board of inquiry into the fall of the Chinook helicopter, in which 29 people died when their helicopter ploughed into a hillside.

The pilot said he believed the machine's controls had jammed - forcing the giant helicopter into a head-on collision course with the Mull. He considered the board of inquiry findings - that the Chinook pilot had chosen the wrong rate of climb - as "unlikely in the extreme".

The pilot, who cannot be named on security grounds, put forward his theory when he appeared as a witness for the family of Flight Lieutenant Jonathan Tapper, the captain of the helicopter involved, at the fatal accident inquiry in Paisley, Strathclyde.

He and another Chinook pilot told the inquiry that Flt Lt Tapper - and most other Chinook pilots - had repeatedly expressed concerns about the new Mk II Chinook. Flt Lt Tapper was said to have voiced concerns "on a daily basis" that it was less capable of doing the job

than the Mk I it replaced. The RAF board of inquiry concluded the likeliest explanation for the crash - which killed the four-man RAF crew and their 25 passengers including Ulster's top anti-terrorist RUC, military and MIS officials - was a high-speed cruising climb at a rate of climb too low to clear the Mull.

The RAF board said that although technical malfunction could not be ruled out, there was no evidence to suggest this.

Central to the evidence has been the low-level flight path the aircraft was taking. Less than a mile short of the Mull the pilot entered an updated navigation marker, or "waypoint".

In the final seconds before disaster the helicopter dramatically increased its climb rate. The change of waypoint - on the RAF board of inquiry results - was part of a pre-planned change from fly-by-sight rules to instrument flying rules. But the pilot said yesterday he thought it "inconceivable" that the helicopter would be that close to land, out of visual contact, and below its safety altitude.

The young (aged 16-24) were the worst spellers, strongly suggesting that standards have fallen. However, the oldest group, aged 55-60, were not much better. They had more difficulty than the young with easy words such as because and complain. The best spellers are in their

Call for new approach to spelling as adults fail test

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Accommodation baffles two-thirds of us, occasionally stamps more than half and around four in ten can't cope with necessary and apologise.

A survey of spelling and punctuation among 980 people aged between 16 and 60, published yesterday, reveals that nearly half of adults cannot spell common words.

Accommodation proved to be the most difficult word in the survey, conducted by the Adult and Basic Skills Agency. 68 per cent spelled it wrongly. Next came occasionally (55 per cent), immediately (45 per cent) and necessary and maintenance (43 per cent).

The young (aged 16-24) were the worst spellers, strongly suggesting that standards have fallen. However, the oldest group, aged 55-60, were not much better. They had more difficulty than the young with easy words such as because and complain. The best spellers are in their

Most common spelling mistakes

Accommodation	Unfortunately
Occasionally	Apologise
Immediately	Receive
Maintenance	Sincerely
Necessary	Allowance

thirties and forties, many of whom were at primary school in the sixties and seventies, when much-criticised "trendy" teaching methods were prevalent. Graduates are better spellers, but a third of them spell occasionally wrongly and 11 and 12 per cent respectively failed to spell sincerely and necessary correctly.

Overall, 11 per cent could not spell writing and thirteen per cent of 16-24-year-olds could do little more than fill in their name and address on a form. Women are better spellers than men.

Alan Wells, the agency's director, said: "Many employers automatically reject applications for jobs if people spell incorrectly on the application form and can't use the right punctuation."

In four out of five people had a poor grasp of punctuation. The use of the apostrophe was a par-

ticular problem. This group also tried to punctuate sayings by "a random scattering of commas."

Those with no educational qualifications did more than twice as badly in the punctuation exercises as those with five or more good GCSEs.

Employers say the fact that more 16-year-olds are getting higher grades in maths and English GCSE does not mean that they can write intelligibly or are numerate enough to cope with work.

Anne Barnes, general secretary of the National Association for the Teaching of English, said: "You only learn to spell by reading a lot. Children are reading less because they watch so much television and have televisions in their bedrooms."

"Spelling-bees" may help some people but not most. Any teacher knows that you can prevent a child ever learning to spell by using the spelling exception approach."

In four out of five people had a poor grasp of punctuation. The use of the apostrophe was a par-

Child bride 'will not go into care'

STEVE BOGGAN

A High Court judge yesterday reassured 13-year-old bride Sarah Cook that she would not be taken into care if she returned to Britain from her "marital" home in Turkey.

Sir Stephen Brown, president of the Family Division, took the step a week after making Esborn Sarah a ward of court. He said he was anxious to ensure the schoolgirl did not think she would be separated from her parents if his order for her to return "forthwith" was obeyed.

Sir Stephen, who conducted a hearing in chambers with Sarah's father, Adrian, 42, and counsel, opened the court to the media to deliver a statement. He said: "In the light of certain reports which have been circulated, it is necessary to say that these are wardship proceedings and not care proceedings."

Essex County Council has no intention at present to take Sarah into care and away from her parents.

"I would wish to say that wardship is not a procedure which represents any threat or

application which might prejudice anybody. What is desired is to enable the court to further the welfare of Sarah and to ensure her protection."

He said he hoped the "emotional climate" surrounding the case could be cooled, but there was little chance of that in Karamanmaraş, south-eastern Turkey, where Sarah's 18-year-old "husband" Musa remains in custody charged with statutory rape.

Sarah's mother, Jackie, 37, has so far failed to persuade the child to return home in the face of a groundswell of national support for her.

Yesterday, Sarah publicly kissed the Koran as a demonstration of her determination to stay in her chosen country. "I love Musa, I love his family, I love this country, I don't want to go back," she said.

She was cheered whenever she went and given gifts, including two gold bracelets. The mayor of the town has already promised the couple a villa when Musa is finally freed. He faces up to five years in jail for statutory rape.

NHS dentists
hardest to find
in South

Higher bid for BR freight was rejected

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

The Government has been accused of favouring a US company to buy three of BR's freight concerns by rejecting a higher bid from a British firm.

Wisconsin Central, which has become the preferred bidder for the three businesses, is to pay £225m while another bid for £240m was rejected by the Government because it was so keen to sell the rail businesses to Wisconsin.

The Government is grateful to Wisconsin for having bought the loss-making Res mail train business last month – expected to lose £10m this year – and was anxious to ensure that the US company won the race for the three profitable railfreight companies, Loadhaul, Mainline and Transrail.

The announcement of the sale is due to be made in two weeks time but it emerged earlier this month that Wisconsin is the preferred bidder for the three businesses.

However, another bidder, a management buy-out team from Mainline Freight, one of the three freight companies which linked up with Candover, the City finance firm, and Associated British Ports, put in bid for £240m.

Mainline was so angered by the refusal of the Government to accept its bid that the company considered seeking a judicial review, accusing the Government of favouring Wisconsin, but refrained because the company feared repercussions within the industry.

Mainline's bid was submitted late after the two initial preferred bids, from Wisconsin and Loadhaul, another of the freight companies, had been referred back for reconsideration.

A rail industry source said: "Mainline thought that if Wisconsin and Loadhaul were being allowed to bid again, then their bid should be reconsidered

and they resubmitted a new offer."

However, despite British Rail wanting it to be considered by the Government, ministers threw it out.

In an interview to be published tomorrow in *Rail* magazine, Ed Burkhardt, the head of Wisconsin, admits he was not interested in the British Rail freight business until he was approached in 1994 in Chicago by Brian Mawhinney, then the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr Burkhardt says that Dr Mawhinney told him: "You should still jump into that water, and be a bidder. Maybe you'll get what will turn out to be a bargain."

Dr Mawhinney admitted to Mr Burkhardt that ministers had made mistakes in drawing up the privatisation scheme but said, according to Mr Burkhardt, that "it will all come out in the price, won't it".

Mr Burkhardt admits in the interview that considerable numbers of jobs are likely to be lost.

Out of 8,500 employed by the three businesses, it is thought that more than 3,500 jobs will go and Mr Burkhardt says that compulsory redundancies will be necessary.

Labour last night said the sale should be stopped. Brian Wilson, Labour's transport spokesman, said: "All these bids should be subjected to investigation by the Public Accounts Committee. These sales are politically driven without an iota of regard to the taxpayers' interests."

The sale has already been criticised by opponents of rail privatisation as wasteful because the Government originally created the three railfreight companies in 1994 to stimulate competition in the industry, but then made it clear that the three would be sold together.

Mr Wilson said: "Millions of pounds were spent on creating the three companies and that has now been wasted."

Heirs and graces: Ken Matthews outside Margam Castle. The sculpture is called 'Mother and Child'

Photograph: Rob Stratton

DNA may unlock aristocratic secret

CHRIS BLACKHURST

A man from South Wales is applying to disinter the bodies of members of a land-owning, aristocratic family to prove he is their rightful heir.

Ken Matthews of Swansea is in discussion with Home Office forensic scientists about the best way to exhume members of the Talbot Fletcher family for DNA fingerprinting tests, which he believes would show he is also a Talbot Fletcher. He is receiving backing from his local MP, Donald Anderson.

He is not motivated purely by a desire to claim an inheritance. Mr Matthews is suffering from a mystery illness which causes fainting that doctors have been unable to diagnose. They believe it may be hereditary.

She left in 1937 when she became pregnant with him. He was eventually given up to the workhouse in Neath and was later adopted. His birth certificate says his father is unknown and records of his adoption are missing from the Neath court where they should be lodged.

Diligent detective work enabled Mr Matthews, who works in the personnel department of a car factory, to locate two half-sisters he never knew he had. They told him about his mother, who died in the Midlands, aged 78, in 1988.

Gradually, the pieces came together. In videotaped interviews, former Margam workers told Mr Matthews his mother had a 12-year affair with John "Jock" Theodore Talbot Fletcher.

Before Mr Talbot Fletcher died last April, aged 91, he was visited by Mr Matthews in Epping, Essex, near the family's Cropped Hall estate. He was

Maid's son plans to disinter bodies in bid to prove inheritance claim

er, the master of Margam and 11th Laird of Saltoun in Scotland, and he was the result. "I had no suspicion at all," said Mr Matthews. "When I was told Jock was my father I couldn't believe it – I was looking for a groundswoman or stablehand."

John Talbot Fletcher inherited Margam, its 12,000 acres and other estates, when he reached 30 in 1933. He was left them by his great aunt, Lady Emily, who specified in her will that when he died, the legacy should go to his eldest son. But Mr Talbot Fletcher had no legitimate children. Perhaps significantly, his marriage was annulled within days of Mr Matthews' birth in 1937.

Mr Anderson, said: "As a lawyer I'm always pretty sceptical about these stories but there is very strong circumstantial evidence. The recordings with the old retainers confirm it was common knowledge the master of the house was having an affair with the maid." But Francis Durrant, of Mills and Reeve, said: "There isn't a claim as far as we are concerned."

Prison staff watched helplessly as a convict held his visitor at razor point and raped her. The Old Bailey was told yesterday.

When officers finally rushed into the room the pair were using for a specially arranged visit, he slashed her throat four times exposing her larynx, the prosecution said.

Nicholas Fryers, 28, had a two-hour supervised visit with the woman at Wormwood Scrubs. When a prison officer warned them time was up, Fryers rose and said he wanted to embrace the woman. "It was a cold and cynical exercise to get her close enough to attack her," Stephen Smyth, for the prosecution, said.

Fryers spun the woman round, holding a razor blade at her neck. He shouted for the door to be locked and the probation officer was taken outside leaving the pair alone. Fryers shouted several demands and kicked a chair to the door.

"A number of prison officers were looking in through the windows wondering what to do," Mr Smyth said.

The woman received three cuts to the front of her neck and one at the back, which was sewn up by the prison doctor.

When interviewed later, Fryers allegedly said: "I admit I had sex but I asked her first," suggesting she consented, said Mr Smyth. Fryers has denied rape and wounding.

The trial continues.

Value of home 'should fund care in old age'

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

The Government should initiate a new equity release scheme to allow the elderly to use part of the value of their home to cover their long-term care, a left-of-centre think-tank said yesterday.

For an average £50,000 home, a couple might have to give up about 40 per cent of its value – less if it was worth more, more if it was worth less – with a lower percentage for single people.

But the cash would provide an insurance which could guarantee cover against the cost of long-term care. The home would only be sold on death and a guaranteed proportion of the home's value would be passed on as an inheritance.

The call to create Peris – partial equity release insurance schemes – came from the Institute of Public Policy Research.

search, as it warned that the costs of long-term care, both in people's own homes and in residential and nursing homes, was set to escalate dramatically. Even allowing for economic growth, costs would double in real terms by 2031, taking about 5 per cent of national income, against 1.8 per cent now.

The present system of means-tested care, which this year is expected to see 40,000 people having to sell their home, is inequitable, demeaning for people who have always been financially independent and discourages savings, the report says.

Longer-term options include creating a new pay-as-you-go social insurance, which would be expensive; building a funded social insurance which would take 30 years to mature; opting for partial cover – running collective insurance for care costs but not "hotel" costs of long-term care; or developing private/public partnership schemes.

The last of these is being actively considered by ministers who have promised a White Paper on funding long-term care. Where individuals cover themselves through insurance for a fixed sum of care, the state

would add that to the £16,000 of assets which individuals are able to keep when they fall back on means-tested care.

Peris could help with that, according to the author of the report, Ed Richards, a consultant with London Economics, and former adviser to Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor.

Today, about 40 per cent of those who retire own their own home, a figure likely to reach 65 per cent in 20 years time.

Creating Peris – something the financial services industry is unlikely to do without government assistance – could take advantage of that, reducing public spending but without forcing individuals to sell their homes during their lifetime.

"At the moment, it is an all-or-nothing situation," Mr Richards said. Individuals either had to invest in private long-term care insurance during their working life, or take the risk of almost all their assets being means-tested away. Creating Peris would provide something in between.

Paying for Long-Term Care:
IPPR, 30-32 Southampton St,
London WC2E 7RA; £9.95.
Leading article, page 14

CPS and police link to boost efficiency

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Prosecution lawyers are to work with detectives in police stations in an attempt to improve both efficiency and the quality of cases brought to trial.

Pilot schemes, to be launched in 12 police centres around the country, will test whether more cases get to court more speedily and with less alterations.

But yesterday the Crown Prosecution Service stressed that working alongside police officers would not mean the independence of the service was compromised. There remained a dividing line between a police investigation and the CPS lawyers giving legal advice on the admissibility and worth of the evidence.

If successful, liaison officers are likely to move into all 43 police areas. A similar move was suggested by Labour last year.

Barbara Mills, the Director of Public Prosecutions and head of the CPS, said: "The aim of the initiative is for lawyers and police officers to get it right first time. This will help to ensure that the right cases go to the right court on the right charge at the right time."

"Lawyers will be advising on evidence and public interest factors in cases, which will help to improve the quality and timeliness of files and promote more efficient use of resources."

The scheme was launched yesterday at Darlington police station, County Durham, where a prosecutor will staff a help desk throughout office hours.

Similar projects will follow in five more stations – Barnsley, Northampton, Shoreditch in east London, Bedford, and Leeds – and at six police administrative support units – Lincoln, South Norwood in south London, Watford, Gwent, Harborne in Birmingham and Thanet in Kent.

Graham Duff, director of CPS operations, said the new procedure would be useful in difficulties over identification, corroboration and hearsay evidence. It was also likely to benefit complex cases, such as child abuse investigations.

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international

EMU in crisis: Tory ministers hope high-level rethink will prepare ground for public debate on postponing 1999 launch date

UK fights for single currency review

SARAH HELM
Brussels

The British government is engaged in a diplomatic offensive to force a review of plans for a European single currency, possibly at the next EU summit in March.

The strategy explains the forecast by a senior government minister last week that plans for European Monetary Union by 1999 could collapse "within weeks". The comments were repeated publicly in scarcely less forceful terms, by the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, at a press conference during a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels yesterday.

Ministers hope such a review would prepare the ground for the first public debate about a possible postponement of the 1999 launch date. Foreign Office lawyers have advised them that a postponement would not necessarily involve rewriting the Maastricht Treaty, as the European Commission claims. But if the majority decided that the treaty did need to be rewritten, "it could be done in five minutes", said one senior official yesterday. "The real issue now is making the political decision about postponement," said another British source.

The Government, which has a vested domestic political interest in EMU postponement,

does not wish to be seen to be dictating to its EU partners. Nor is it taking formal proposals for a special summit. The review could even take place at another EU meeting already scheduled for this year, officials said. However, ministers believe that, given the mounting uncertainty over EMU, such a review should be held as soon as possible and preferably at the level of heads of government.

There were strong indications yesterday that Britain would like its EU partners to put the review on the agenda of the next summit, to be held in Turin in March, to launch the inter-governmental conference on reform of EU institutions.

French and German leaders continued to rebuff British scepticism about monetary union, showing signs of anger and irritation at what many see as British attempts to undermine the project. Werner Hoyer, the deputy German foreign minister, warned against "talking monetary union into the ground". Hervé de Charette, the French foreign minister, said France would make every effort to be ready to join the single currency in January 1999.

The EU Monetary Affairs Commissioner, Yves-Thibault de Silgy, insisted once again yesterday that most member states would be ready for monetary union by next year - the

test year for countries wishing to take part. "Barring an economic or political catastrophe, France, Germany and a majority of EU states will be ready at the end of 1997," Mr de Silgy said in an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. He added that to fail, forcing a renegotiation of the Maastricht treaty on European unity and damaging progress toward a single European market, would be "a catastrophic scenario that I do not dare even to imagine".

But Mr Rifkind, in his television and press conference comments yesterday, questioned the credibility of the project in the most strident terms. He urged his partners to

"provide more than statements - more than assertions" that EMU would go ahead as planned. He added: "It is difficult to retain the credibility of the timetable for monetary union simply by statements of intent. We need something stronger than that."

Mr Rifkind strongly hinted that Turin could be the forum for such a debate, saying that discussion of the future of the single currency would become increasingly a priority "over the next few weeks".

There is no sign yet that either Germany or France would agree to reconsider EMU, which they insist must proceed on the basis of the timetable and

a set of fiscal and economic membership rules agreed at Maastricht in 1991. The view in Bonn and Paris is that, while questions may be raised on the fringes, governments must hold the line of confidence in the entire project will collapse.

Mr Rifkind came close to accusing his partners of deceiving their publics by blind adherence to rhetoric. "Each day almost senior European statesmen from France, from Germany, from Spain, from other countries express doubt and uncertainty as to whether 1999 is a realistic target. I doubt if this can go on day after day, week after week, without some serious credibility problem," he said.

IMRE KARACS

Bonn

Helmut Kohl has caved in to his junior coalition partners' demands for tax cuts to boost the sluggish German economy.

In a significant reversal of policy, Chancellor Kohl agreed to a reduction of the "solidarity surcharge" - 7.5 per cent of income tax, which pays for rebuilding east Germany. As the government intends to honour its eastern commitments, the shortfall will have to be made up by the exploding budgets of the national government and the Länders.

This in turn will stifle efforts to keep the federal budget deficit within 3 per cent of GNP, as required by the Maastricht criteria for European monetary union. A government report to be released today is expected to confirm that Germany will fail to meet the EMU targets in 1996 for the second year running.

The "solidarity surcharge" is to be trimmed in the middle of next year, creating a gap of some DM4bn (£1.8bn). The government is also reported to be considering tax cuts amounting to DM34bn. Not all lost revenue will be balanced by less expenditure. Though severe cuts in welfare are scheduled, these will save only DM32bn.

Theo Waigel, the finance minister, proclaimed at the weekend that increasing government debts to pay for the revenue shortfall was "out of the question", but this pledge may turn out to be as durable as the promise to keep the "solidarity surcharge" intact. Faced with soaring unemployment and economic stagnation, Mr Kohl may have to admit that Germany will not be able to escape recession in the confines imposed by Maastricht.

Although the Chancellor refuses to accept that monetary union might have to be postponed beyond 1999, he appears to be increasingly isolated. *Der Spiegel* reported this weekend that two cabinet ministers and some of his closest advisers were secretly seeking a way out of the "Maastricht trap".

The Free Democrats in Mr Kohl's government have been sniping at the "solidarity surcharge", with their leaders threatening to turn the levy into a resignation issue, at the expense of the Kohl government.

Now the Free Democrats will be able to proclaim a triumph, putting them in a strong position for three crucial Land elections in March. That should ensure the government's survival, but it might be at the price of abandoning monetary union by 1999.

By IMRE KARACS

IN BRIEF

EU holds back recognition of Belgrade

TONY BARBER

Europe Editor

Yugoslavia, the rump state comprising Serbia and Montenegro, said yesterday that it planned to normalise relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, but the European Union said this did not go far enough to merit full EU diplomatic recognition of Belgrade.

"We have decided to wait until we can be sure of the situation," Germany's foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, said in Brussels.

He added that the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, had sent him a message underlining the US view that



Victims: Trooper John Kelly, 21, single from Sunderland



Trooper Andrew Ovington, 25, married, from Peterlee



Lieutenant Richard Madden, 25, single, from Somerset

Grisly harvest of war's hidden killers

Christopher Bellamy witnesses the struggle faced by troops trying to free Bosnia from a deadly legacy of 6 million mines

deadly legacy of the war. "We lifted six mines yesterday," said Col Rusanov, who had lifted three himself.

"There are at least 15 minesfields in this small area alone. I've ordered my men to stop trying to defuse mines this morning, as the fuses will be frozen. Ice on the detonator makes things more difficult, but we expect a thaw tomorrow."

In a neighbouring field, two Russian soldiers had finished putting up a white tape with yellow tabs - their standard marker for a minefield. "There. The Christmas decorations are complete," joked one of the soldiers, who had been combing the

ground with a metal detector.

We followed a muddy path across the field very carefully. Nobody was going to step off it, until we reached a small building. Col Rusanov showed us a map of the immediate area, which had been near the front line between Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, north of Tuzla. It was covered with dozens of marks indicating minefields.

"All anti-personnel mines, which have killed and maimed far more people round the world than nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. In Bosnia, clearing them at a rate of six a day here, six a day there, it will take a long time to dispose of 6 million."

mines, but other roads in the area were still risky. A few days earlier the Bosnian Serb had told a colleague a minor road across the zone of separation was clear, but on reaching the former front line, local people started shouting "mines". He reversed carefully, driving in his tracks.

The British vehicle that stumbled on an anti-tank mine west of Mrkonjic Grad was not so lucky, but they are normally less dangerous than the far more numerous anti-personnel mines, which have killed and maimed far more people round the world than nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. In Bosnia, clearing them at a rate of six a day here, six a day there, it will take a long time to dispose of 6 million."

Then I caught the glint of the fine wire, almost invisible against the fast-running water, and, on the far side, the anti-personnel mine, hidden among the white, frosty vegetation on the river bank. Anybody stumbling over the wire as they attempted to cross the stream would set off the mine, blasting lethal fragments in all directions at leg or waist height.

Colonel Viktor Rusanov is head of the engineers for the Russian brigade based north of Tuzla. He estimated there were up to 6 million mines in Bosnia. Back in 1993, I had heard 3 million. One of the reasons why the front lines remained so static for so long was the combination of

EU holds back recognition of Belgrade

TONY BARBER

Europe Editor

Yugoslavia, the rump state comprising Serbia and Montenegro, said yesterday that it planned to normalise relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, but the European Union said this did not go far enough to merit full EU diplomatic recognition of Belgrade.

"We have decided to wait until we can be sure of the situation," Germany's foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, said in Brussels.

He added that the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, had sent him a message underlining the US view that

ern governments have long grounds that this indicates a territorial claim by the Skopje government on the northern Greek province of Macedonia.

However, in the EU's eyes, Belgrade's statement left important questions unanswered about the nature of the agreement with Macedonia, one of six republics that made up the former Communist Yugoslavia. The Macedonian authorities indicated yesterday that this issue remained unresolved and an obstacle to mutual recognition.

Lastly, it may be significant that the Yugoslav statement referred only to a "draft treaty" being approved by Belgrade. This suggests that Serbia's President, Slobodan Milosevic, the most powerful Yugoslav leader,

is leaving himself the option of revising certain aspects of the agreement with Macedonia.

The EU and the US have consistently pressed Mr Milosevic to extend diplomatic recognition to Bosnia, Croatia and Macedonia, as this would indicate that he had formally given up hope of annexing parts of those three states to rump Yugoslavia. The 1991-95 wars in Bosnia and Croatia were sparked partly by the Serb ambition of creating a Greater Serbian state, while Mr Milosevic's long delay in recognising Macedonia has raised doubts over his intentions towards that country.

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Kohl gives in to tax-cut demands

SA massacre revives spectre of 'third force'

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

A massacre of job-seekers in Johannesburg yesterday has raised fears that a "third force" is again striking black-on-black violence in South Africa in order to undermine the government of President Nelson Mandela.

At least eight men were killed and 24 wounded when unidentified gunmen opened fire on 5,000 people waiting for the chance of a job outside the NF Die Casting factory in an industrial park at Airode, south-east Johannesburg.

According to the ruling African National Congress, the attack bore the hallmark of "third force" activities that plagued greater Johannesburg in the run-up to the historic 1994 elections. The third force was the name given to a shadowy alliance between right-wing elements in the security forces and the conservative Zulu-based political party, Inkatha.

Security guards and survivors interviewed at the plant and a local hospital said the trouble started at around 3am, when a group of eight men tried to

jump the huge queue that had formed outside the plant the night before. When the men were told to join the back of the line, they pulled out AK-47 assault rifles and 9mm automatic weapons and started shooting into the crowd without warning.

The gunmen then fled to foot. Some of the victims, bleeding from bullet wounds, staggered more than half a mile from the scene of the attack before collapsing. Both attackers and victims were black. Hours after the incident, pools of blood, discarded shoes and spent bullet casings were all the evidence left at the slaughter.

One wounded man at the Nalspruit hospital, who was too frightened to give his name, claimed that he was the first person shot by the gunmen. He said that when the men first approached the queue, he had the impression that they were looking to start trouble rather than find work. "I don't know why anybody would want to shoot honest men trying to support their families," said the man, who was wounded in the leg.

Since the election, most ANC-Inkatha violence has been

limited to KwaZulu-Natal, where the two parties are involved in a bloody war for control of the province. There is evidence that the violence there is being fomented by outside right-wing elements.

Other than "third force" activities, several alternative motives for the attack have been offered, including tensions between two rival unions at the plant and the intense competition for jobs.

Although South Africa's economy is booming, unemployment remains very high, particularly among the black majority. Rumours of 200 new jobs at the plant caused thousands of men from the nearby East Rand townships of Thokoza, Kathlehong and Vosloorus to descend on the industrial estate 13 hours before the gates opened.

Police have so far suggested no motive for the incident but have announced that they intend to establish a witness protection programme for survivors - a move which suggests that the attack was more than a violent outburst by angry unemployed men.



State of shock: A survivor of the massacre at the Airode Industrial park waits his turn as police begin interviewing witnesses. Photograph: AP

Gulf states' dispute intensified by 'Zionist' TV jibe

MICHAEL SHERIDAN
Diplomatic Editor

A long-running dispute between the small Gulf states of Bahrain and Qatar has taken an unprecedented turn after Qatar's state television broadcast interviews with radical Islamic opponents of the Bahraini ruling dynasty.

Such a move is unheard of among monarchies of the Gulf, who normally overcome disagreements to co-operate in the suppression of religious dissent. Bahrain and Qatar are members of the Gulf Co-operation Council, which exists to preserve the status quo.

The rulers of Bahrain and Qatar have long been at odds

over the ownership of the Hawar islands, small islets between their territories thought to be rich in resources. Bahrain has very little oil, while Qatar possesses enormous reserves of natural gas. A few Ruritanian skirmishes have taken place over the years to little consequence. But civil disorder in Bahrain and dynastic upheaval in Qatar mean that the latest conflict is drawing close attention from Saudi Arabia and from Western powers who base air and naval forces in the area.

There has been serious unrest among the Shia Muslim majority population of Bahrain, a small archipelago of 600,000 people off the coast of Saudi Arabia. The government said at least 550 suspects had been rounded up recently after riots and explosions in luxury hotels around the capital, Manama.

The leaders of Bahrain's Shiites attack the ruling al-Khalifa family, members of the dominant Sunni strand in Islam. The opposition strongly denies claims by the government that Iran, the only Shia power in the region, is behind the trouble.

Last year the Bahraini authorities exiled several Shia clergymen to London, including a charismatic preacher trained in Iran, Sheikh Ali Salman, who addressed public meetings to denounce the activities of Ian Henderson, a British veteran who runs Bahrain's security services.

To general astonishment in the Gulf, Sheikh Salman next appeared on Qatari television, whose broadcasts from the capital, Doha, can be seen in Bahrain, on 13 January. He was

interviewed sympathetically on a discussion programme with Dr Mansur al-Jamri, a member of a prominent family opposed to the al-Khalifas. The programme was hardly inflammatory, but Sheikh Salman said those who tried to link Islamic activists to terrorism - as the Bahraini government does - were agents of the "international Zionist movement". In a direct message to the Bahraini regime, the sheikh added that "dialogue between the religious movement and Arab governments and intellectuals is the only way out for the Islamic world from any future bloodbath".

Although Sheikh Salman and Dr al-Jamri were careful to stress their commitment to dialogue, the very fact that the programme was broadcast signified that relations between Qatar and Bahrain had virtually broken down.

Pro-reform strike in Swaziland eases

Mbabane (AP) — Shops reopened and factories resumed operations yesterday as a week-long national strike for democratic reforms in Swaziland ended.

Rural sugar and timber plantations remained at a standstill, but the main towns of Mbabane and Manzini teemed with people. A heavy police and military presence helped public transport to resume.

"I think people have needed the dictator," said Richard Nxumalo, president of the Swazi National Federation of Trade Unions and one of three labour leaders arrested last week and later released. "But the strike is not over."



over the ownership of the Hawar islands, small islets between their territories thought to be rich in resources. Bahrain has very little oil, while Qatar possesses enormous reserves



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10 international

Right wing prolongs Italy's political agony

ANDREW GUMBLE

Rome

After nearly a month of seemingly intractable governmental crisis, Italy's political parties today begin their third, and what looks like their third, round of consultations with President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who has promised that by Thursday the crisis will be resolved. The aim of the talks is to try to ward off an immediate dissolution of parliament with a cross-party programme for electoral and constitutional reform.

The country has been at a standstill since Lamberto Dini,

the outgoing prime minister, first handed in his resignation last month at the end of his already temporary mandate. With no clear majority of any kind in parliament, and little prospect of improvement if elections were to be held under the present voting system, Italy has, in effect, turned into a government-free zone.

Political leaders, conscious of the embarrassment they are causing as Italy begins its sixth term as president of the European Union, have been trying to address several problems at once: the need for a new government, the need for a new

electoral system, and the need for deep constitutional reform. It always seemed unlikely that a parliament made up of 26 squabbling parties would ever agree to a coherent programme to change the political face of Italy under such high-pressure conditions. And yet there has been more to this crisis than the chronic instability of the Italian system. One man has proved the stumbling-block to a solution at every turn - the leader of the reformed neo-fascist National Alliance, Gianfranco Fini.

When the crisis began, the rest of the political establishment was happy to give Mr Fini

a second mandate, albeit with a stronger ministerial line-up to replace his stop-gap team of technocrats, but Mr Fini said no. The next proposal was for a government of broad consensus to take Italy at least through its EU presidency, but again Mr Fini vetoed the plan, saying that only sweeping constitutional change would be an acceptable alternative to early elections.

A panel of cross-party constitutional experts set to work and came up with a new two-round electoral system to reduce the number of parties in parliament, a stronger mandate for the prime minister to

provide the country with a clear direction, and a series of disincentives to stop parliament bringing down government after government, as in the past. But again Mr Fini rejected the majority view, saying he would stop at nothing short of what he calls *presidencialismo* - conferring sweeping powers on one directly elected political leader who would be only loosely accountable to parliament.

In some ways the young, ambitious Mr Fini has played his cards smartly, using his pivotal role within the conservative coalition headed by Silvio Berlusconi to swing the politi-

cal agenda his way. Partly exploiting the anti-corruption investigations in Mr Berlusconi's business empire, he has to a large extent stepped out of the shadow of his mentor and staked a claim to the leadership of the Italian right.

Opinion polls show him gaining in popularity, suggesting that of his political peers he would have most to gain from a snap general election.

But the nature of Mr Fini's proposals has produced swivels of alarm, since his concept of *presidencialismo* seems dangerously close to the authoritarianism of Mussolini, once

ranks. "We have to be careful that the premier does not turn into a despot," he said.

Mr Fini's closest constitutional adviser, Domenico Fisichella, quit the National Alliance three days ago, saying the direct election of a prime minister free of parliamentary constraint would be "essential". The CCD, a small Christian Democrat party allied to Mr Berlusconi and Mr Fini, has threatened to withdraw its support unless the measure is dropped from the agenda.

Even Mr Berlusconi was yesterday distancing himself and trying to reassess his own authority within conservative

India's graft scandal spreads

TIM MCGIRK

New Delhi
India's spreading corruption scandal has engulfed another victim. SR Bommai, president of the left-wing Janata Dal party, was forced to resign yesterday after his name appeared in an Indian industrialist's diary that listed pay-offs made to dozens of top politicians.

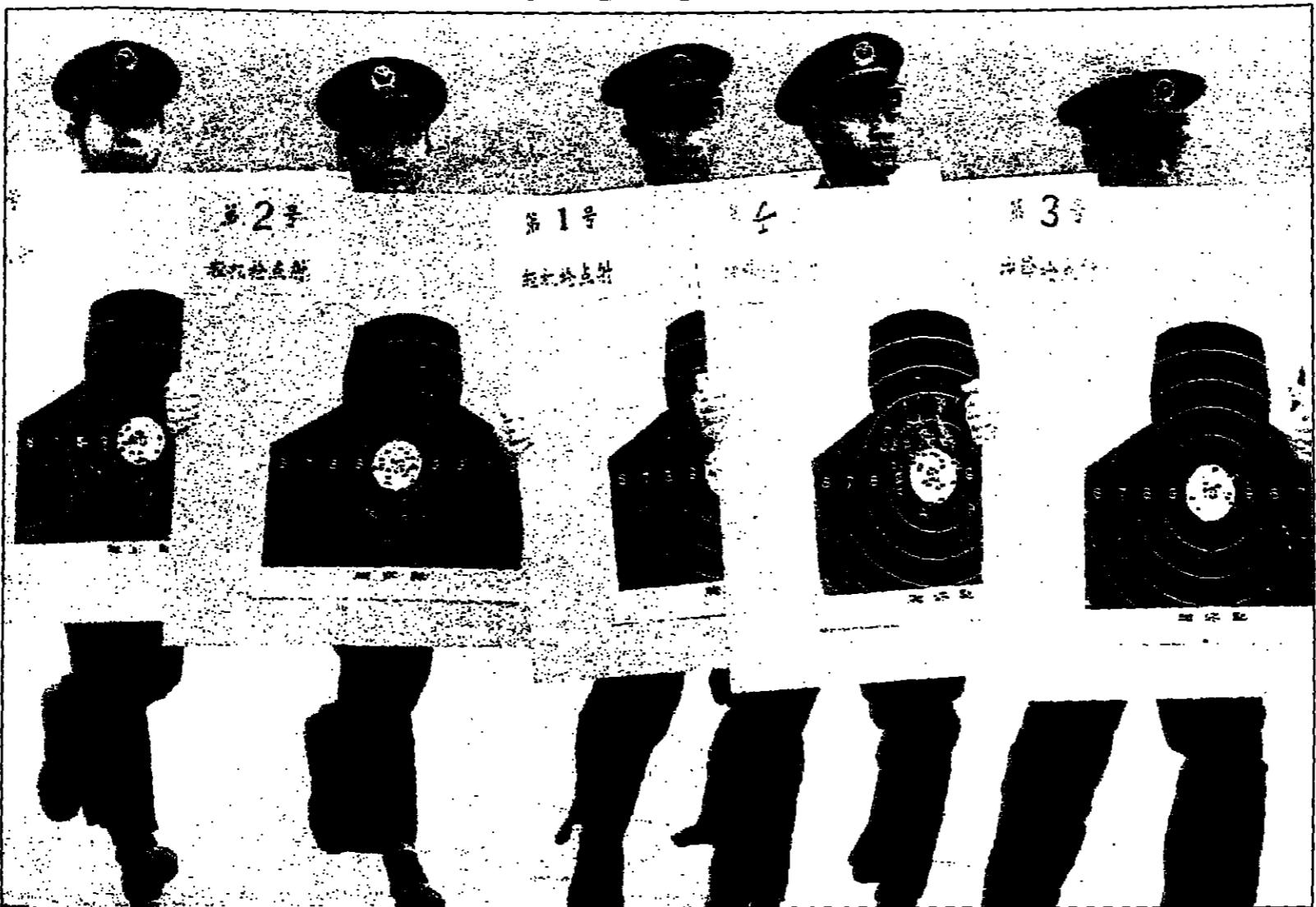
Narasimha Rao, the Prime Minister, is accused of receiving £500,000 from the Jain industrialist family, and the opposition is demanding that he should resign. Mr Rao is alleged to have received the sum through a shady holy man and power broker, Chandra Swamy. So far, the explosive contents of the Jain diaries have led to the resignation of the main opposition party president, Lal Krishna Advani of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and three cabinet ministers from the ruling Congress party.

With general elections only three months away, the Janata Dal hastily replaced Mr Bommai with Bihar state's populist chief minister, Lalu Prasad Yadav. The Janata Dal is the largest party within the left-wing National Front, a mosaic of regional alliances and parties representing the country's 120 million Muslims as well as Hindus on the lower rungs of the caste hierarchy.

Mr Yadav comes from Bihar's large but lowly cow-herding caste, and since taking office as chief minister he has been threatening to turn Patna's exclusive golf course into a school for dalitmen. He also enraged upper-caste Brahmins by paving the way for a few Untouchables to become Hindu priests.

No single party may win enough votes in April to form a new government. The Congress party has slipped so badly that, according to a secret opinion poll carried out by the police intelligence Bureau, it will come third behind the BJP and the National Front.

Peking propaganda: People's Army singalong will be part of attempt to reassure colony



Spot on: Chinese troops who will garrison Hong Kong retrieve targets at a propaganda display in neighbouring Shenzhen

Photograph: Reuters

We love you, Chinese troops tell Hong Kong

TERESA POOLE
Peking

It should have been the plum posting for any ambitious People's Liberation Army soldier.

If yesterday's pledges from Peking are to be believed, however, the thousands of mainland soldiers destined to be garrisoned in Hong Kong after 30 June 1997 are in for a hard slog. They can look forward to planting trees, dredging rivers, studying "life" in the colony, holding singalong sessions to proclaim: "I love you, Hong

Kong" - and doing an awful lot of reading.

After they arrive, they will not be allowed off base except on official duties "and in an organised manner". And, lest Hong Kong is concerned about the appearance of the mainland troops heading their way, they are all well-groomed, and tall by Chinese standards: the male soldiers will all be over 5ft 5in and the women at least 5ft 3in, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Such is the sensitivity of a PLA garrison being stationed in

Hong Kong after sovereignty reverts to China next year that the mainland propaganda machine has gone into overdrive in an attempt to reassure the population. Yesterday, in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone bordering the colony, the soldiers put on a flawless display for members of the Sino-Hong Kong Preparatory Committee, the mainland-appointed body that will oversee China's preparations for 1997.

It showed just the sort of things to put Hong Kong people's minds at rest: stunningly

co-ordinated crack marksmen shooting the heads off targets, athletic, aggressive troops storming buildings, tanks being blown up and so on.

The image presented by the Peking-controlled newspapers in the colony was rather more benign. *Ta Kung Pao* newspaper said top of the list of songs adored by the soldiers was "I love you Hong Kong".

Xinhua also emphasised that all the hand-picked soldiers have at least senior middle school education, and that most speak English or Cantonese as

well as Mandarin Chinese. During training in Shenzhen, they have been studying the "laws, life and social customs" of their future home. "Reading has become an important part of our daily life," one soldier told *China Daily*.

Another promised reporter: "We won't go to saloons, we won't go to bars, we won't go to karaoke parlours." They might not be able to afford the night life in any case: one Peking-run daily said an army commander in Hong Kong would be paid less than £100 a month.

Freed French captives were well treated

Marib, Yemen — Seventeen French tourists freed after being held hostage for five days by Yemeni tribesmen were heading by road for the capital, Sanaa. Their captors had set them free after giving them antique gifts, including traditional daggers and firearms. The freed hostages, including 13 women, appeared to be in good health and had been well treated, officials said.

Reuter

South Africa condemns coup in Niger

Pretoria — South Africa joined world protests against the coup in Niger, with the Department of Foreign Affairs condemning the takeover and calling for constitutional rule to be restored in the West African country. "As long as such events persist on our continent, Africa will not obtain the international respect and esteem to which it is entitled," it said. Lt-Colonel Ibrahim Bare Mainassara, the armed forces chief of staff who ousted Niger's first democratically elected president, Mame Mamane Ousmane, said the army had no plans to stay in power.

Reuter

Monks find Buddha beer hard to swallow

Peking — Buddhist monks in east China have forced a local brewery to give up making its Buddha brand beer, claiming it insulted their reputation and dignity. The *China Daily* newspaper reported that the brewery agreed to pay 5,000 yuan (£400) in compensation and apologise to the monks for "loss of face".

AP

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al agony

Separatist hero set for tough test in Quebec

HUGH WINSOR
Ottawa

The man who holds the future of Quebec and possibly of Canada in his hands, the 55-year-old lawyer and career politician Lucien Bouchard, was sworn into office as leader of the Quebec provincial government yesterday, vowing to use his new position to pursue his goal of separation.

He is faced, however, with an immediate budget crisis and a strong message from the public opinion polls that Quebecers are tired of elections. He has promised he will spend the immediate future concentrating on rebuilding the economy and attempting to tame a soaring deficit before putting separation to another electoral test.

As the inaugural ceremonies were taking place in Quebec City, the Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, and 200 of his Liberal MPs and senators were sequestered in Vancouver for a brainstorming session, seeking strategies to counter the charismatic Mr Bouchard and the increasing support for separation in Quebec polls.

The federal Liberals are hoping that the realities of running the near-bankrupt Quebec government will take some of the shine off Mr Bouchard, and there were some early warning signals about what the new premier is facing at the weekend convention which proclaimed him leader of the Parti Québécois. Mr Bouchard, who formerly led the Bloc Québécois, the group of separatist MPs elected to the federal parliament, had pushed aside the retiring Quebec premier, Jacques Parizeau, mid-way through last autumn's referendum campaign.



Lucien Bouchard: Budget headache looming

Premier, is the direct result of the bizarre performance by Mr Parizeau on referendum night, when during an angry speech, he blamed the separatist loss on "big money and ethnicity". Mr Parizeau's remarks were seen as a racist insult, and powerful members of his Party Québécois caucus forced him to quit.

But some of those same power brokers warned Mr Bouchard last weekend that he

should not tamper with Quebec's generous social welfare as he attempts to regularise provincial finances.

The new premier has called for a period of belt-tightening and warned of funding cutbacks for health, welfare and education, because he does not want to go ahead with a tax increase that had been planned by Mr Parizeau.

This amounts to something of an about-face from Mr Bouchard's rhetoric during the referendum campaign, when he had argued that a separate Quebec was the best defence of welfare from the deficit-cutters in Ottawa. Quebec's welfare payments are higher than most other provinces, and its civil servants are paid about 20 per cent more than federal counterparts.

In an effort to upstage Mr Bouchard's swearing-in, Mr Chrétien shook up his cabinet last week. Four senior ministers, three of them Quebecers, were forced to make way for new blood. Out of character with his usual caution, Mr Chrétien reached outside Parliament to appoint a 40-year-old University of Montreal political scientist, Stéphane Dion, as his new minister of inter-governmental affairs, in charge of the national unity issue. He is already being compared with Pierre Trudeau.

A staunch federalist, Mr Dion has already warned Mr Bouchard that if Quebec can split away from Canada, then Quebec is also divisible. The strongly pro-federal Montreal area as well as the northern lands inhabited by the equally federal native Crees would have an equal right to split away from Quebec to rejoin Canada.

Greek flag row gets Turkish goat

HUGH POPE
Istanbul

No better symbol of the pettiness of Turkish-Greek conflicts could have presented itself than a barren group of rocky islands in the Aegean, which has abruptly become the object of a "war of the flags" between the two countries.

The fuss started on 26 December when a Turkish coaster ran aground on the granite-covered archipelago, known as Imia in Greek or Kar-dak in Turkish. The islands - whose only inhabitants are goats - are about halfway between the Greek island of Ka-

lymnos and Turkey's Bodrum peninsula, a magnet for British tourists.

The coaster's captain initially refused to be towed off by expensive Greek tugs. The two foreign ministries exchanged notes. And that should have been an end to it.

But the mass media of the two countries had scented a story. Right-wing Greek media, possibly keen on a situation that could embarrass the new socialist government, highlighted the mayor of Kalymnos' decision to assert Greek sovereignty by driving a stake into the rocks and tying a Greek flag to it.

Athens claims it was given in 1948 when Italy ceded the south-east Aegean islands known as the Dodecanese to Greece. Italy had taken them from the Turks in 1912. The legal position of the outcrops is debatable - they are probably Greece's by treaty obligation, possibly Turkey's if international laws were applied - and the atmosphere may be ripe for escalation.

A Greek spokesman laughed at such talk and blamed the media for exaggerating the story. He suggested that the most sensible way to resolve the dispute would be to have a referendum among the goats.

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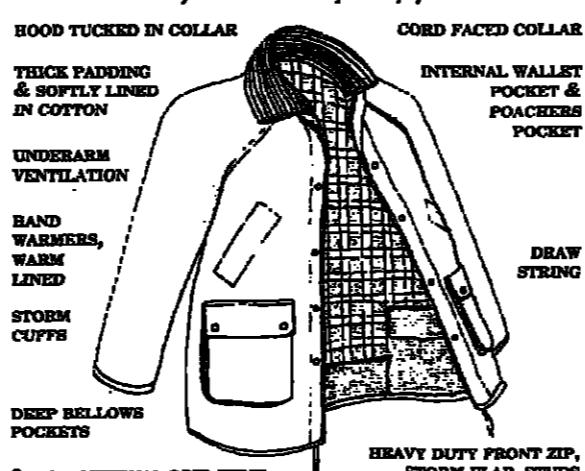
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FHM31

international

California bikers trade leathers for lobbying

TIM CORNELL
Los Angeles

"Be Courteous to Our Neighbours," reads the sign at the gate of the Sagebrush Café, not far from a double row of Harley-Davidsons. "Please Don't Rev Your Engines in the Car Park."

Tony Bourne is a designer in the garment trade, but this Sunday he's sporting the badge of the Southern California Harley Riders Association, smoking a pungent little cigar and spitting obscenities. "Helmet laws should be for minors. We're adults that know better. Kids, they're the ones that keep crashing all the time."

California's biker fraternity runs from yuppies riding custom bikes on Sunday jaunts to a hard core who live in the saddle. But there is one issue that unites them - loathing for the state's helmet law, enacted in 1991. It has driven them to trade bikers' brawn for political muscle.

Fighting for the right to cruise the Pacific highways with the wind in their hair, bikers' groups are recognised as some of the state's sharpest political operators. Last week the California assembly voted 42-30 to repeal the helmet law. The new Republican majority, in a curious alliance with people usually associated with drugs, gangs, and violence, rallied to the bikers' cause. Legislators cited freedom of choice against the nanny state.

"I'll give you my Benjamin Franklin quote," said Boige, 52, a biker and sometime bouncer at the Sagebrush. "When you give up freedom for security, you lose both." And how about this one? "More people die of obesity than motorcycle accidents in America. Let's outlaw butter!"

Bikers have been attending civics classes, raising money, holding rallies and walking the corridors in the state capital, Sacramento. They clashed with David Knowles, a Republican assemblyman who voted for the law, remembers being surrounded by a group of angry motorcyclists in leathers as he shook hands at a local parade. "When they held out their business cards instead of razor blades, they impressed me," said Mr Knowles, who shortly afterwards reversed his stand.

"I realised they were not irresponsible people - they were working folk who wanted government out of their hair and out of their life."



Cars swept away by floodwaters in the village of Puissenguir in southern France yesterday. Four people, including two children, were killed when flash floods swept through the Heraut department

Photograph: Patrick Gardin/AP

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They laughed when Andrew Lloyd Webber said he wanted to put TS Eliot to music. Who's laughing now? asks **Rebecca Fowler**

How 'Cats' conquered the world

They said it would never work: a musical in which grown men and women would dress up as cats and sing along to the words of TS Eliot's poetry. It was spurned by theatrical investors as madness, scoffed at by critics and until the very first night disaster was predicted for *Cats*. Even that was blighted by a bomb scare, which cleared the theatre.

But 15 years on, *Cats*, the musical, is the most successful show in the world. Last night, on its 6,136th performance, it overtook *A Chorus Line* as the longest-running musical ever in London. Its creators, Andrew Lloyd Webber, the composer, and Cameron Mackintosh, the producer, have both received knighthoods; and between them they have been at the forefront of establishing the musical as the greatest commercial force in the history of British theatre.

When audiences finally beheld the spectacle, it was like nothing else to have appeared on the British stage. The Jellicle cats exploded from every corner of the theatre in the opening scene, rolling around in the Lyra and legwarmers that became the dance uniform of the Eighties; the New London Theatre was rebuilt to accommodate a set that broke all boundaries by using the whole of the theatre instead of just the stage; the frenetic combination of acting, dancing and singing buried the conviction that Britain could not take on the Americans at their own game; and one song, "Memory", was etched on the national consciousness, sung by everyone from street buskers to opera singers.

According to its supporters, *Cats'* greatest legacy was to create an entire new audience of theatre-goers.



eager for the new mix of populism and innovation, who had been turned off by theatre's elitism. In its first eight years, every seat in the house was sold; even now only a handful lie empty.

Raymond Gubbay, the promoter who puts on hugely popular shows of classical hits, said: "It brought a huge number of people to the theatre who wouldn't otherwise have come, and broke all the barriers. Even the set broke away from tradition and the proscenium arch, to make it more accessible and less formal."

Sir Andrew, fiercely sensitive, still has his critics who accuse him of dragging theatre down to the lowest common denominator. None, however, can deny the power of *Cats* as a popular institution on a par with the Royal Family and, more recently, the National Lottery.

As the public fell in love with the Lyra and the crashing chords of "Memory", Lloyd Webber and Mackintosh piled up

their profits and became the most profitable figures in British musicals.

Sir Andrew remembers it as a high-risk venture: "We knew that when it came to the crunch we would either come up with something very extraordinary or a total turkey. I had forgotten how close we came to calling the whole thing off."

Still searching for the last £50,000 to launch the production, Lloyd Webber, having already remortgaged his house, invited senior Warner Brothers executives to listen to him playing the score on his piano. They weren't impressed. In the end, he and Mackintosh raised three-quarters of the £450,000 capital they needed from small investors who put in £75 each.

The financial success in large part stemmed from the innovative marketing strategy created for the show. Under the guidance of the fine art sales rooms. His recently acquired Picasso bought for \$29.5m is on view at the National Gallery. Sir Cameron Mackintosh is said to be worth about \$200m. Sir Andrew has homes in Berkshire, New York, London, the south of France and Ireland. The success of *Cats* also allowed the publishers Faber and Faber, which is part of the TS Eliot

marketing of theatre on to a different plane. It created the theatre production as a global product; Andrew Lloyd Webber became a global brand.

Sheridan Morley, the theatre critic and broadcaster, described it as a breakthrough for the economic potential of theatre. "Until the end of the Sixties, shows that opened in London would be bought for America in the way that books were, and redone by the Americans. What they established was this idea of moving in like a task-force, to put exactly the same show on whether it be in Manchester or Malaysia. It showed we could provide a musical that could rival anywhere, including the Americans, and export it."

The effects of its financial success spread beyond the theatre, including establishing Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber as a significant patron of the fine art sales rooms. His recently acquired Picasso bought for \$29.5m is on view at the National Gallery. Sir Cameron Mackintosh is said to be worth about \$200m. Sir Andrew has homes in Berkshire, New York, London, the south of France and Ireland. The success of *Cats* also allowed the publishers Faber and Faber, which is part of the TS Eliot

estate, to flourish as a small independent while others have been swallowed up in mergers. "That was probably more significant than a single note of the musical," said Robert Hewison, the cultural historian.

But the theatrical legacy was to redraw the map of the West End. It was the start of an unprecedented crossover between the popular commercial world of musicals and the high-brow world of subsidised classical theatre. Trevor Nunn, the director of *Cats*, was the first to make the leap from the Royal Shakespeare Company. He was joined by John Napier, the RSC designer, while Gillian Lynne, the choreographer, had a Royal Ballet background.

"There isn't any longer a feeling that people who want to be taken seriously shouldn't do that," said Trevor Nunn. "I was fascinated by what do we mean by populists and how it might be possible to do a work with hidden underlay, and for a populist audience still to get it. It seems to me it works."

Others now move in and out of populist and classical theatre with ease. Sam Mendes, tipped as the next director of the National Theatre, directed Sir Cameron's production of *Oliver!*; Declan Donnellan of Cheek By Jowl, applauded for its Shakespeare productions, is taking on *Martin Guerre*. Sir Cameron's latest musical, *The Success*, has created a new generation of musical performers, as the demand for singers and dancers grows with the success of musicals.

There are plenty who still turn up their noses at *Cats*. Its critics deride it as nothing more than shallow entertainment, with no lasting artistic merit. Its supporters, including Raymond Gubbay, who is staging the 100th anniversary production of *La Bohème* this week at the Royal Albert Hall, believe that in time Sir Andrew may be seen as the Puccini of his day, a composer spurned by the Establishment who was a popular hero.

"There is no doubt songs like 'Memory' will be around for decades and decades to come. Maybe it does offend the snobs, but if it's a beast that touches people's hearts, and it does, why not? It's just a bloody good tune."

and Budapest's City Theatre - (805). Tonight's worldwide audience likely to be 2,000, given approx 90 per cent attendance rate



WHAT HAS GONE INTO IT?

The London show has consumed:

31,673 headache pills;

35,623 posters (150,000 square feet);

450 microphones (*Cats* pioneered the use of multi-microphones);

140,280 throat pills;

3,900 pairs of shorts;

3,450 costumes for 262 artists;

10,800 make-up sponges;

1,470 batches of eye shadow, lipstick, pencil, mascara and blusher



WHAT HAS COME OUT OF IT?

Merchandising: *Cats* was the first fully merchandised musical. You can buy badges, baseball caps, bookmarks, keyrings, TS Eliot's *Possum's Book of Cat Stories*, T-shirts, watches, cassettes, CDs. Merchandising from its show now accounts for 5 per cent of Really Useful Group's profits of £4.6m last year. The hit song "Memory" has been played 46,875 times on British television and radio.

Tiffanie Darke

THE AUDIENCE

7 million people have seen the London show

Based on 1991 survey the average audience for modern musical:

34% overseas; 45% rest of UK;

21% London

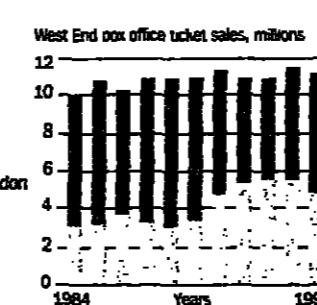
34% audience came to London

specifically to see a show

54% female; 45% under 35; 94% came in couples or groups

For first eight years *CATS* ran without a seat unsold.

Book early: the entire house is already sold twice over to an oil company for corporate junket in 1997



ECONOMICS

Ticket prices:

1981 £3.75-£9.50

1996 £10.50-£30

A £1,000 investment in *Cats* in 1981

would now be worth £26,500

£1bn: box office gross, London

£85m: box office gross, London

£450,000: original production cost

\$300,000: Broadway takings last week

200% return for investors in first 10 years

100% return for investors in last five years (using production costs)

Cats is the foundation on which Really

THE COUNTRIES

Useful Theatre Company was built

until 1988, when *Phantom of the Opera* started to become successful.

It represents 10 per cent of company's income of about £110m last year. That is set to rise after film deal with Steven Spielberg.

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THE INDEPENDENT

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The law and the stalker

Women around Britain will shudder. A young mother living in Cambridgeshire, supposedly under police protection, is raped by a stalker who had followed her for months. This morning many women will be feeling more vulnerable as a result. The perpetrator, who had previously attacked his victim, is still on the loose a fortnight after the rape.

This case sounds like a horror film designed to describe what would almost beyond the reach of the law, in which the police are powerless to protect people against known threat. But this is not Hollywood. This is not a crazed fan in pursuit of a star protected by private bodyguards. This is middle England.

The police have said they were "comfortable" with the protection they were giving the woman. They clearly underestimated the viciousness of the man they were dealing with. He followed his victim for four months, sent her letters and left messages on an answering machine which threatened violence and sexual offences. He then raped her in her own home. Even though the man involved has a number of distinctive features and was in the area for a considerable time, the police have yet to identify him.

It is too early to judge the way the police dealt with this case. It may have been that there was an operational shortcoming that can be easily corrected. But it is certainly difficult to avoid the conclusion that the seriousness of the threat was not recognised, despite many warning signs. Everyone lives with the remote possibility of random violence. But women understandably and rightly expect the police to deal with someone who makes them terrified to go

to bed, pick up the telephone or visit the supermarket.

After this case the police will face an uphill struggle if they are to convince women that they will be supported properly when in danger. It may be that the authorities should consider, in future, offering 24-hour protection in such cases until the stalker has been dealt with. Whatever the details the police should urgently review their procedures.

It is also time to take a careful look at the law covering stalking, an offence of which there is growing awareness. At the moment, a stalker, if charged at all, is likely at worst to face action under the 1986 Public Order Act, which provides a maximum £1,000 fine as punishment for someone found guilty of threatening someone else. Alternatively, a stalker can be bound over to keep the peace or can face a civil injunction restraining him from repeating his behaviour.

These measures are hardly draconian. They are unlikely to provide adequate or speedy protection for a woman, whose life can become a misery before the law finally steps in. Here is an area in which politicians could fruitfully explore the possibilities for strengthening the law. There are civil liberties to be weighed up; it would be a mistake to whip up hysteria over a single case. But calm consideration should be able to generate a specific anti-stalking law along the lines of changes that have already been introduced in California.

This attack occurred in the Prime Minister's constituency of Huntingdon: he would be better off dealing with its worrying implications than trading empty insults, as he did yesterday, with Labour over which party is soft on crime.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Romance plays little part in the lives of most child brides

From Ms Sue Rose

Sir: You suggest (leading article: "Sad tale of a modern-day Juliet", 25 January) that child marriages are OK on the grounds that in some places they are popular and culturally acceptable.

In male-dominated societies child marriages do not exist out of any sympathy for the romantic ambitions of 13-year-old girls. They exist to pander to the sexual tastes of men and to ensure that girls have little opportunity to develop independent lives and, instead, remain under the control of men. One thing the average child wife does not have, as a rule, is the support and protection to "flee" when things go wrong.

It is sad that, in your attempts to prove your cultural tolerance, you end up supporting a practice which is killing and hurting large numbers of girls worldwide. Cultural practices in all their many forms that specifically discriminate against females kill more women and girls around the world than any other single cause.

Yours faithfully,
SUE ROSE
London, SW1
26 January

From Ms Joan Hignan Davies

Sir: The marriage of 13-year-old Sarah Cook should not shock us; the marriage of female children

is still a commonplace in many parts of the world.

Despite a century of missionary schooling, despite contact with the West and Western ideas, small girls generally remain outside human rights considerations.

The marriage of seven- or eight-year-olds is actually on the increase in east Africa - sleeping with a virgin is believed to cure AIDS; and 10- to 11-year-olds cannot be guaranteed to be "pure" enough. The marriage of nine- to 10-year-old girls is also on the increase in Pakistan, partly as a result of a backlash to foreign criticisms of Muslim practice.

The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 was told that half a million women a year die as the result of complications of pregnancy and childbirth: what was not pointed out was that many of these mothers are only children themselves.

Sarah Cook is a lucky girl to arouse so much concern: but then she is British, and white.

Yours sincerely,
JOAN HIGNAN DAVIES
Upton-upon-Severn
Worcestershire
25 January

The writer is a member of Anti-Slavery International.

From Ms D. V. Baird

Sir: I cannot see any useful purpose being served by bringing

Sarah Cook back to England, unless she wishes it.

She seems happy and well-cared for among her "Turkish laws" and might as well remain there for the present. There used to be a tradition of betrothed brides going to live with their future in-laws, to learn the skills of managing a household and to be educated.

Sarah might use her time learning the language and customs of her adopted country and perhaps continuing with some kind of formal education. Knowledge is never wasted and if, in time, she and Musa can marry properly, so much the better. If they decide to part, nothing will have been lost, she will still be young enough to follow another path.

Yours etc,

V. V. BAIRD
Eastbourne, East Sussex

26 January

From Mr Michael Johnson

Sir: Sarah Cook is already caught in a conflict between Turkish state law, which does not permit her "marriage", and Islamic law which apparently does. The position is similar in the UK, where the minimum age for marriage is imposed for social and civil reasons, not because of dogma: the Christian churches accepted child marriages for centuries. At the same time, this reaction lays us open to the charge of hypocrisy,

because under-age sex and pregnancies happen here and we tolerate them while still forbidding marriage before 16.

There is a real risk of letting this rather pathetic case balloon into a clash of cultures, in which the arguments would not all be on the British side. The backlash could seriously weaken our credibility when with other governments we take a moral position in pressing Turkey on fundamental human rights issues. It could also further damage understanding between Islam and western Europe, including Britain.

None of that would help Sarah. If she were in the UK, the case would be handled according to UK law and policy. As she is in Turkey she should be allowed to await the decision of the courts and, as she grows up, to decide with her family what to do.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL JOHNSON
London, N6

28 January

From Mrs V.A. Dunton

Sir: The Turkish mayor who is supporting 13-year-old Sarah Cook's marriage to a waiter says "girls mature earlier in the desert". Have you been to Braintree? Yours faithfully,
V. A. DUNTON
Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire

29 January

From Mr R. G. Skilling

Sir: Scots soldiers serving in Northern Ireland are glad their children are educated there or in Scotland and not in England. Why can Scots and Irish educate children when England, apparently, cannot?

Yours,

R. G. SKILLING
Guildford, Surrey

Fast track, but to where?

From Professor Joan Freeman

Sir: Acceleration or fast tracking (to use the American term) of bright children in schools ("Blair fast track scheme for schools", 29 January) is rare in continental Europe, where the academic success of the children does not appear to have suffered.

Acceleration is often a sad move for the children. European research shows they lose the companionship of their own age group, feel themselves to be undervalued, are not as frequently picked for the sports team, and so on.

Acceleration is just what it says: specific learning without time to round out understanding or to experiment with different approaches. It is a sticking plaster to cover up for a poor basic system. Our children deserve better. Yours faithfully,

JOAN FREEMAN
London, W1

29 January

From Mr John Morgan

Sir: Michael Howard accuses the Labour Party of being the criminal's friend because it failed to support Government measures to increase police stop and search powers and remove a suspect's right to silence. These measures specifically contravene the Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the US constitution, which form part of the US Bill of Rights. They are perceived as being fundamental human rights and any American politician seeking to restrict them would be committing political suicide. Does Mr Howard therefore think that all American presidents and Supreme Court justices for the last 200 years, including Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and even Ronald Reagan, were "criminals' friends"? Yours faithfully,

JOHN MORGAN

London, SW18

29 January

Eminent 'friends' of the criminal

From Mr Bill Jordan

Sir: You carried the news of a proposed take-over of Hasbro, maker of Sindy and Cabbage Patch dolls, by Mattel, producer of Barbie dolls ("Barbie eyes up Action Man in Toytown battle", 26 January). How would this possible take-over affect those who work for these two firms? It is no secret that most of their toys are made in factories in China and Thailand, which compete fiercely to win production contracts from the large brand-name toy companies.

Your article described Hasbro's chairman, Alan Hassenfeld, admitting that he has to be more "aggressive". We hope that this aggression does not fall on the tens of thousands of workers in China and other Asian countries who work for Hasbro's and Mattel's sub-contractors.

At least 250 Asian toy workers have been killed in the last four years - 90 per cent of them women, and many of them child labourers. It was in a Thai factory which made Hasbro's Cabbage Patch dolls that the world's worst factory fire occurred, in which 188 people were burnt alive, in 1993.

What is needed is a new global code of conduct signed by toy manufacturers - and Mattel and Hasbro as the world leaders could show the way - to ensure that contracts drawn up with sub-contractors include sections which deal with workers' rights.

Yours sincerely,

BILL JORDAN

General Secretary

International Confederation of

Free Trade Unions

Brussels

26 January

do the essential work, is at the root of the massive problem of staffing costs.

A year ago the Scottish Prison Service tackled this problem by introducing a radical restructuring that placed prison officers into one of five pay bands: those in the cell blocks who took the most risks received the most money, while those, for example, who manned the prison gate received a lesser amount - meaning a £5,000 per annum cut in pay.

Had Michael Howard adopted this approach, there would be no need for these inept cuts in prison staff.

Yours sincerely,

MARK LEECH

Editor

The Prisoners' Handbook

Bristol

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25 January

do the essential work, is at the root of the massive problem of staffing costs.

A year ago the Scottish Prison Service tackled this problem by introducing a radical restructuring that placed prison officers into one of five pay bands: those in the cell blocks who took the most risks received the most money, while those, for example, who manned the prison gate received a lesser amount - meaning a £5,000 per annum cut in pay.

Had Michael Howard adopted this approach, there would be no need for these inept cuts in prison staff.

Yours sincerely,

MARK LEECH

</

agony

It's low, it's dirty, and it's personal

Politicians deplore abusive soundbites – then put the boot in. It will be a very negative election campaign

Here is an early sketch of a planned Labour Party broadcast. A line of enormous pigs are seen in gory close-up, messily feeding. The image is intercut with footage of Conservative MPs in the House of Commons. MP – snout – MP – snout – MP's soundbite – pig's grunt – soundbite – slaver. A well-known actor's voice intones: "This has been the greediest, sleaziest Government in modern British history..."

Here's another rough cut. John Major is shown in action during the last election campaign, making his notorious promises on taxation and the economy. "A serial liar – catch him before he strikes again" snarls the voice.

Or another: clips of Asil Nadir, Ove Botman and Kamlesh Puri, all of them past Tory donors and "wanted for questioning", and then of Nazmin Virani, jailed in 1994. "Which party is really the villain's friend?" sneers the voice. "Which party pocketed their cash?"

All right, I made them up. I have no idea if there are Labour-supporting copy-writers working on these or similar lines in some Soho ad agency.

The point is only that the Conservatives ought to be careful about the kind of personalised attacks being launched against Labour; however tempting they may be. A certain mutual restraint is the foundation of respectable politics. The Central Office billboard campaign against Harriet Harman was probably irreducible: Michael Heseltine's assertion that Labour is "traditionally on the side of the villain" should have been resisted. If I am concerned about the Government's legislation on asylum seekers, does that make me the mugger's mate? Apparently it does.

Conservative strategists will retort that they are only using the gap between Labour actions and rhetoric to point up policy failures, a legitimate tactic. A traditional one, also: attacks on left-wing leaders for their hypocrisy are as old as progressive politics. Fox, Gladstone, Lloyd George, Wilson – all would have failed the Central Office "do as I say, not as I do" test. All were far grander in their private appetites than in some, at least, of their demagoguery.

Labour could equally well argue that by reminding voters of the misbehaviour of individual Tory MPs and of past embarrassments over party funding, they were "really" exposing what happens when one party has been in power for too long. They may also consider that the public, faced with the crimes of sending a boy to a grammar school or, alternatively, misleading them about their taxes, may regard the latter as worse.

But the problem is the tone of the attacks, not the content, and politicians know this as well as the rest of us. Everyone can spot the slither into the slime pit. When Michael Howard tries to smear Labour as pro-crime and Labour attacks him as a cynical racist, both sides know what they're doing.

And the frustrating thing is that the crudest, most bitter attacks really are a diversion. There are vital gaps and political failures to be attacked and highly effective ways of attacking them that don't involve nastiness.

If the polls are anything to go by, the electoral impact would be favourable:

A Harris poll for the *Daily Telegraph* earlier this month found 54 per cent in favour of a return to full selection, as in most of Britain's competitor



ANDREW MARR

Everyone can spot the slither into the slime pit

themselves. This they will certainly try to do. Ministers and advisers are already preparing a switch in policy on schooling, so that pupil selection will be openly embraced and defended, rather than being sneaked into the state system, as now.

Some members of the Cabinet would like to bring in selection with vouchers too, but John Major is still uncommitted. A likelier outcome is that the Tories will use their election manifesto to propose an extension of selection along with the expansion of grant-maintained schools. There would be no return to the 11-plus exam but there would be a promise of new grammar schools and new specialist schools in a more diverse system.

If the polls are anything to go by, the electoral impact would be favourable: a Harris poll for the *Daily Telegraph* earlier this month found 54 per cent in favour of a return to full selection, as in most of Britain's competitor

countries. But such a shift would also put pressure on Labour's logic. The party believes in streaming and setting inside schools, dividing children by classroom. How different in principle is this kind of selection from having different schools? That is the kind of hard-edged political attack confident Conservative Party would be relying on, rather than the somewhat petty tone of the anti-Harman campaign.

In a similar way, the Labour Party has a whole ammunition depot of devastating material to use against the Conservative tax record without stooping to calling Major a liar. Personal or abusive campaigning is bad for all politicians because most voters listen to it and believe both sides: they agree that Labour are hypocrites and that the Tories are sleazy. Their disunity is general to the activity, not specific to one party or another.

Here, though, we come to the final layer of political double-think. Most politicians would, if asked, agree with almost everything in this column. In private, even the most senior people deplore the rise of abusive soundbites, profess to be despairing about the level of exchanges in Prime Minister's question-time and say they are deeply worried about the public's cynical dismissal of democratic politics.

But then they go out and start kneeing one another in the privates, returning desperately to the vituperative like alcoholics going back to the bottle. They say they abhor recent developments in American politics, where "negative campaigning" reigns unchallenged, and millions are spent on vicious attacks on the opponent's morals, record, intelligence and

motives. But every indication is that the 1996-97 campaign in Britain will be similar and designed to be similar: the main parties are even sending their apparatchiks off to Washington to watch and to learn how it's done.

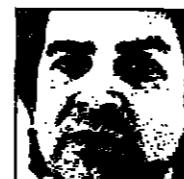
Why? It seems the whole self-regarding crew who have tried to make democratic politics into a pseudo-science have finally cowed the politicians. Ministers and shadow ministers regard the ad-gurus, the pollsters, the spinphilosophers and the campaign strategists, particularly if they are Americans, or have once met some Americans, with awe. Some of these political parasites have damaged the reputation of democracy, swallowed debate and produced horrible own-goals. I think a few fresh-sounding arguments from politicians, delivered in clear English, would be vastly more effective. But in our scientific age, these people are now regarded as gods.

Or at least as experts, which is better. Few politicians care nearly as much for the reputation of politics as they do about defeating the other lot. If they are told negative campaigning works, they will giggle and assent to stuff which would make them, as private citizens, deeply uneasy.

I prefer to end such columns on an optimistic note. But on this subject it is impossible to be jaunty: first indications are that we are in for a fitful, degrading campaign. If the party leaders go that way and then, when it's over, complain about the dangerous cynicism infecting our democracy, then we should treat their protestations with contempt. That would be one act of collective hypocrisy too far.

Behind the Sara Keays row lies the question: is it acceptable to subject a child to media scrutiny?

Glare that marks for life



BRYAN APPLEYARD

Sara Keays, Lord Parkinson, the High Court and Brian Sedgemore MP have succeeded in creating an extraordinary tangle of legal barbed wire. Keays wants publicity for her handicapped daughter and her treatment. Parkinson, the father, does not and has the backing of the High Court that such publicity would not be in the child's interest. And Sedgemore, under protection of parliamentary privilege, has named the parties in a Commons motion backing Keays. Yesterday the media and lawyers were showing signs of hyperventilation when discussing the issue.

But what, beyond legal wrangles, is the issue? In essence it is this: how can children be used and who decides? In the Keays case, matters of politics and personality may be as important as general principles. But I cannot, under all this barbed wire, discuss them here, so I must stick to generalities.

The case has much in common with that of Jayne Bowen. Known for a long time as "Child B", Bowen was refused NHS treatment for leukaemia. Legally she could not be named. But her father obtained private treatment and wished to pay for it by selling her story to the *Daily Mirror*. The *Mirror* would only do the story if Child B could be identified and, eventually, the courts agreed on the basis that the treatment, which might be life-saving, must constitute a greater good for the child than privacy.

But the belief that children ought to be protected from publicity is clearly well-founded. Publicity is a kind of absolute. It places you perpetually on the files of the media and, potentially, for the rest of your life it makes you recognisable. Like innocence, complete privacy once lost cannot be regained. In fact, the High Court injunction protecting the Keays child is known as a Mary Bell order. Bell, as an 11-year-old, killed two children in 1968. She now lives under a new identity, to protect her from her own childhood notoriety – a clear example of the permanence of a media "baptism".

Rightly, therefore, we assume that children should not be exposed. Children might not agree; most are dazzled by the idea of any kind of fame. But then many children probably want to drink, smoke, gamble or have sex. Publicity is like all of those things: habit-forming and life-changing. They all require a reasonably mature mind to grasp their implications. Making a child famous, as Michael Jackson should testify, is risky.

Pop fame, in general, is seen as good. Most parents, perhaps foolishly, would not resist. Legal or intimate fame or notoriety is different. In most of these cases the courts and parents would agree: protect the child. The memory of some celebrated case

things either because they might help find the child or because they will provide a warning for other parents. They are intended to use the emotions aroused by a child lost or perhaps in distress to achieve a specific end. The parents have decided to use the missing child and their own emotions to earn the co-operation of the media.

The media interest is clearly in the drama, the sensation, and the police would claim to be exploiting this interest for reasonable ends. The routine, however, has taken over, the event has become a convention, the appeal for help or the warning has become secondary, almost unnoticed.

Sara Keays and Jayne Bowen's father wished to break the legal protection of their children for a very definite reason. In both cases the claim is very clear: specific medical benefits will ensue from the publicity. They, as parents, have decided that these benefits outweigh the benefits of privacy.

This must be a subjective judgement. However calculable the benefits will be, nobody knows what price the children will pay for being famous. In addition, however honourable the motives in these cases, other parents might have less respectable reasons. They might expect to make money out of their child's fame, they may wish to settle some score, they may, like the nuts 'n' sluts, fancy the idea of being famous.

All of which is to say that there must be a strong public interest in the uses to which children are put, even when those uses appear to be obviously virtuous. The legal principle of *parens patriae* – which means that the state has a parental role towards its citizens – is a good one, even if it seems to conflict with the demands of liberty. Bizarre as it may sound, we are all, to some degree, children of the state.

In fact, this principle is more important than ever, to balance the increasing demands of publicity. Even the most libertarian observer must acknowledge that the extremes of media intrusion go far beyond the democratic right to know. This is bad enough when some adult is persecuted, intolerable when a child is involved.

Inevitably the lines are finely drawn. Children cannot be utterly protected and parents cannot be completely free to use them as they like. I don't know what justice in the Keays case would be, I'm not sure anybody does. But it is clear that this is the latest twist in a private story defined at every stage by the demands of sensational publicity.

The problem is that claims for the benefits of publicity can become very tenuous indeed. Obviously neither democracy nor human well-being is really served by the mad confessions on these television shows. But what about those cases on the evening news bulletins where police parade parents of missing children, often in tears, before the media?

These events are taken to be good

It is based on the democratic assumption that informing the people is intrinsically better than keeping them in ignorance and it is, to a greater or lesser extent, built into almost every type of institution. At its best it genuinely helps us to make informed decisions; at its worst it justifies the cruder exploitation. The nuts 'n' sluts shows on American television, in which victims are persuaded to reveal their most intimate lives, can claim that it is both psychologically healthy to reveal yourself and democratically desirable. The wrecked family, drunk on the momentary fame of television, can, in a sufficiently crazed democratic society, be made to seem as significant as the Watergate investigation.

The problem is that claims for the benefits of publicity can become very tenuous indeed. Obviously neither democracy nor human well-being is really served by the mad confessions on these television shows. But what about those cases on the evening news bulletins where police parade parents of missing children, often in tears, before the media?

These events are taken to be good

Like innocence, complete privacy once lost cannot be regained

ANOTHER VIEW

Ken Worpole

is already ample evidence that large sums of money spent on restoring original buildings without a programme of community consultation, development and involvement, will end in tears, as restored features are vandalised or burnt out again.

Applicants should apply some of their hardest thinking to the questions



Sara Keays wants publicity for her daughter; the High Court maintains it would not be in the child's interest
Photograph: Tom Pilston

grammed activities and decent toilets, cafés and well designed play areas.

To be fair, the "heritage" guidelines display a sensitivity to these pressing social issues. But they also need to consider the unique role that parks play as part of a continuum of contested public spaces in British towns and cities today, and problems of safety are simply addressed by the solution: more CCTV cameras, please. This will not do, even though at least one park in the North-east now has CCTV cameras and floodlights operating a dawn-to-dusk security regime among the play equipment and floral borders.

Elsewhere, parks managers are attempting to "crowd out crime" through events, encouraging more people back into parks, providing pro-

comment

An investment in our future



PADDY ASHDOWN

If I had been subjected to selection, I would have failed at 11 and finished school at 14. Fortunately, one teacher inspired me just in time. I want every child in Britain to have what I had. A good teacher, a chance to specialise, the core skills to go on learning and lots and lots of second chances.

We all now seem agreed on one thing: education is going to be central to the next election. Given last week's angry parliamentary exchanges, this may seem something of a mixed blessing. But underneath the bombast and bluster of party political dogfight, quite a lot of consensus is emerging.

There is wide agreement on the importance of education for Britain's future economic success and social cohesion – and for a liberal society in which no one is enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.

There is acceptance of the crucial role of pre-school education, the idea of life-long learning, the importance of the information revolution.

Finally, beyond 14, we should be reshaping the whole curriculum structure, breaking down

Education is a one-chance event for too many

the divide between "academic" and "vocational", higher and further education; transforming narrow A-levels into a broad-based, modular curriculum like the international baccalaureate; making degrees credit-based; all providing a framework for lifelong learning in which everyone is guaranteed a period of education or training at a time of their choice in adult life.

This is a radical agenda. Any programme to raise standards in schools will need three strands. First, better back-up and support for schools after inspections – after all, you don't get fitter just by weighing yourself. Second, more involvement of parents in their children's education, based on new parent-school agreements – which I first advocated eight years ago. And third, higher teaching standards. That doesn't just mean isolating bad teaching. It means giving incentives – such as sabbaticals – to good teachers.

But the biggest challenge is to create a truly effective structure for life-long learning. Education remains a one-chance event for too many in Britain – and quality varies wildly. So to start with we need pre-school education for all children from the age of three. Everyone is agreed on its value. But without the money to make it happen, "valuing pre-school education", like every other good educational intention, is meaningless waffle.

In the classroom, we should be using information technol-

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Yesterday's announcement by the Heritage Lottery Fund of an ambitious funding programme for urban parks is timely and welcome. Parks are uniquely valued parts of our urban landscape and, in spite of serious patterns of decline, more than 8 million people will visit their local park today.

It is the social role that parks play in urban communities that is perhaps their most important contemporary function – as a realm of freedom in an otherwise expensive and regulated world. In this there are significant differences from the era in which the great Victorian town parks were developed. They were established to provide an escape from disease, over-

crowding and promiscuous social behaviour.

It is this difference between then and now that raises potential problems for the best use of lottery money.

The lottery guidelines naturally emphasise heritage, conservation and restoration themes; and because it is capital money, there is a consequent emphasis on landscapes, artefacts, the refurbishment of original buildings, appropriate Victorian fixtures and fittings and so on. But the dangers of it becoming a "new park-railings fund" must be avoided. There

is already ample evidence that large sums of money spent on restoring original buildings without a programme of community consultation, development and involvement, will end in tears, as restored features are vandalised or burnt out again.

Applicants should apply some of their hardest thinking to the questions

Take good care in the park

ANOTHER VIEW

Ken Worpole

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Applicants should apply some of their hardest thinking to the questions

Granada stalked Pearson with offer worth £5bn

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Granada spent seven months last year stalking Pearson, the media and financial services company, but abandoned a potential bid when it emerged that the Cowdray family would not accept an offer of up to £5 a share.

It is believed that Granada, which last week won a two-month battle for Forte, the hotels and restaurants concern, was preparing a break-up bid to secure Pearson's range of media assets, which include Thames Television, the independent television production company, and Grundy Worldwide, makers of the soap, *Neighbours*.

At £9 a share, Pearson would be worth just over £5bn. The Cowdray family, with Lazard Brothers, the merchant bank controlled by Pearson, whose chairman is Lord Blakenham, own 21 per cent of the group-making a hostile bid hard to win. Neither Granada nor Pearson

would comment. A Granada source said the management team was tied up in preparations for the takeover of Forte, and deep in negotiations to sell parts of the hotels empire.

Meanwhile, Marriott, the US hotels group mentioned as a possible buyer for some of the Forte properties, yesterday said it had turned down an offer from Granada for an asset swap involving Forte's Meridien and Exclusive chains.

Granada's interest in Pearson has long been rumoured in the market. But analysts said most potential bidders would put off by the family stake.

"This is very difficult company to take over, as others have already discovered," a Pearson insider said. "Even Rupert Murdoch couldn't do it with 20 per cent in his pocket."

Mr Murdoch made a run at the company in the late 1980s, eventually building a 20 per cent stake he later sold at a profit.

Analysts said a bid would have made sense for Granada, but only at a maximum price of

£9, which Henderson Crosthwaite has calculated to be the maximum break-up value of the group. Pearson shares closed at 650p last night, toward the high end of analysts' trading ranges.

It is believed the share price already includes a marginal bid premium.

Granada's interest came as little surprise to media analysts, who pointed out that Pearson has long had a reputation for sleepy management, and has only recently moved to reduce back-office costs following a two-year strategic shift from luxury goods and services to media.

"Some of what they are doing now is clearly aimed at heading off a potential bid," said one leading media analyst.

There has also been speculation that Pearson and MAI, the financial services and media group headed by Lord Hollick, could merge their financial operations, in a move to preempt any break-up bid of either company. The two are partners in the new Channel 5 service.

Pearson called in analysts in



Keeping it in the family: Lord Blakenham, chairman of Pearson, which analysts say could present a difficult takeover target. Photograph: Herbie Knott

December to paint a downbeat picture of current trading. City houses consequently lowered their estimates for 1995 to about £240m, not counting a one-off gain of £460m from the sale of Pearson's 14 per cent

stake in BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster. It also announced it would incur £32m in additional restructuring costs, following changes to back-office systems.

"They spent a fortune on

management consultants to cut a few costs," said one analyst. "Most companies would have taken these charges long ago."

Analysts have been generally supportive of management changes, announced last week.

The company's three main lines of business will report to three senior executives. David Bell, former chief executive of the Financial Times Group, will be responsible for information. Greg Dyke, former head of LWT and chief executive of Pearson Television, will have primary responsibility at board level for films and entertainment. David Veit, formerly assistant managing director, will handle other entertainment ventures.

Westdeutsche Landesbank buys Panmure

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Westdeutsche Landesbank yesterday became the latest German giant to make an important investment banking push in the City, with the purchase of the broker Panmure Gordon from NationsBank of the US. The purchase price was not disclosed, but is believed to be around £35m.

Panmure Gordon has been bought to plug the equities gap, which is the main weakness in WestLB's plans to build up a global investment banking presence through its London-based unit, West Merchant Bank.

"This is an important building block on which we hope to expand our European equities activities as well as looking to increasing in emerging markets," said Patrick Macdougall, chief executive of West Merchant Bank.

Deutsche Bank, the biggest of the German banks, was the first to target London as the base for its ambitions to become one of the world's leading investment banks by the end of the decade, centered on Deutsche Morgan Grenfell. Over the past year it has been hiring aggressively, notably expanding its securities business.

Dresdner, Germany's number two, quickly followed suit, buying Kleinwort Benson last summer for £1bn.

WestLB, a public sector bank with total assets of £280bn, made plain last year its plans to

build its global business around West Merchant Bank in London.

It first approached NationsBank last summer. "They convinced us that Panmure Gordon's capabilities fit more into their long-term strategy than into our own. Theirs is a European strategy, ours is much more North American," said Richard Roddy, head of NationsBank Europe.

There was speculation last night that NationsBank, which is the third-largest in the US, was getting out of Panmure because the broking house complicated a separate acquisition plan that was more in line with its strategy. Mr Roddy said the disposal of Panmure "has no implications for Garfimore", the UK fund manager which has been put up for sale by its French parent, Banque Indo-suez, and which has a joint venture agreement with NationsBank. "We will continue to build our capital markets business in London," Mr Roddy said.

West Merchant Bank is about to start up its derivatives business with the team it hired last October in London and New York from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell. It is also expected to announce shortly a senior individual hiring in the fixed-income business. The main priority with Panmure Gordon was to build up its European equities capability, and in particular business between Britain and Germany.

MAGNUS GRIMOND

An auction for Trafalgar House's Ideal Homes subsidiary could begin in the next few days despite last night's agreement by the house-builder Persimmon to pay £170m for the business.

The deal, to be partially paid for through a £91m cash call, tops the £160m which the rival Beazer Homes is thought to have been prepared to bid. But Beazer said yesterday it was "keeping its options open" after previously claiming it had been excluded by Trafalgar from negotiations to sell the business.

It is believed the deal will

make the York-based Persimmon the UK's fourth-biggest housebuilder, must be cleared by Trafalgar shareholders at an extraordinary general meeting on February 22. One option still open to Beazer would be an approach to the group's main shareholders to get them to overturn yesterday's agreement. Beazer said it was "evaluating the situation".

Its decision could turn on the value of tax losses being sold with Ideal. Neither Persimmon nor Trafalgar would give any indication as to their size, but sources suggest that Beazer

might be prepared to add them to its original bid, thought to have been around £160m.

John Watkins, a Trafalgar director, said last night: "If Beazer want to make an improved offer they can do that and if they come up with something sufficiently interesting, we will talk to them. We have a duty to our shareholders to do that."

Mr Watkins admitted that Beazer had not been included in the formal bid process for Ideal, which began after Trafalgar's preliminary results were published on 15 December. A number of parties, not including Beazer, were invited to

make a formal offer, he said. Beazer subsequently lodged an expression of interest, but the Persimmon offer was preferred on grounds of price, the commercial terms, the degree of readiness to complete and the shorter timetable, he claimed.

Persimmon will receive a £3m compensation fee if it fails to reach agreement on the offer.

It is calling on shareholders for £91m in a one-for-two rights issue to part-finance the Ideal acquisition, its first, but the market generally reacted well to the deal. The shares fell just 4p to 191p yesterday.

Duncan Davidson said the

rationale for the acquisition was that it would be earnings-enhancing from the start, even before taking account of the tax losses and any cost cuts. The plan was to close six of the combined group's 21 offices, but Mr Davidson said no indication as to possible redundancies or other cuts. However,

the typical small office which is under threat of closure is thought to employ around 15 people, pointing to the loss of around 90 jobs. Ideal also has a head office at Woking, very close to another site at Weybridge in the south of England, which could be combined.

The enlarged group will sell around 6,500 houses a year, ranking after Wimpey, Beazer and Barrett Homes. One of the key reasons for the deal was Ideal's land bank. Mr Davidson said. The group will own 23,700 plots or around four years' usage, at an average cost of around £16,200 each.

Persimmon estimated profits would dip to £22.5m for the year to last December, from £25.2m before, after a difficult selling period between April and September. It is proposing to hold the final dividend at 6.5p, to make a maintained total of 9.5p.

Persimmon's agreement on Ideal under bid threat



Willing to stay on top: Ian Byatt, the frequently controversial and interventionist water regulator, believes that many challenges still lie ahead

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Ian Byatt, the water industry regulator, has asked to stay in the job after his present contract expires in June because of the continuing challenges in the sector. He has been at Ofwat since September 1989; just before the industry was privatised, and was widely expected to step down.

Mr Byatt believes that he should continue because of fundamental changes facing the industry, including the trend towards takeovers and mergers and the wider debate over the future of regulation as whole.

Water has been at the centre of controversy since the government sell-off because of bills soaring well above inflation, driven partly by European rules on

quality and the environment. Mr Byatt was at the forefront of the move to challenge the Government regulator, has asked to stay in the job after his present contract expires in June because of the continuing challenges in the sector. He has been at Ofwat since September 1989; just before the industry was privatised, and was widely expected to step down.

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The industry has also attracted criticism over high dividends and boardroom pay. The row reached a crescendo over falling service standards during and following last year's drought.

Ofwat does not intervene in boardroom pay, but Mr Byatt has asked companies that had supply problems to make the necessary investment to prevent the situation recurring.

Ofwat confirmed that Mr Byatt "is prepared to stay in office" for another term. But a spokeswoman said that the decision was a matter for the Secretary of State for the Environment.

It is thought that although Mr Byatt is not without critics, he is regarded in Whitehall as a relatively sensible choice among the ranks of the regulators.

Boots expected to dispose of Childrens World

NIGEL COPE

Boots shares rose 12p to 619p yesterday on expectations that the group is set to sell its Childrens World business, which has not made a profit since it started in 1987.

Storehouse, which owns Mothercare, is tipped as the most likely buyer of the chain, which is expected to fetch around £40m-£50m.

Boots declined to comment on the possible sale yesterday. Storehouse also declined to be drawn on details, but a spokesman said Mothercare's first out-of-town store, which opened in Fosse Park, Leicestershire, last year, had been a success. All 52 branches of Childrens World are out-of-town.

Boots has been under pressure to take the axe to some of

its under-performing businesses, which include the DIY chain Do It All as well as Fads and Home-style.

Boots started Childrens World in 1987, hoping to capitalise on a demand for hassle-free shopping for children that involved an element of fun. The stores sell toys, clothes and nursery equipment and feature play areas which include hister-skelters.

However, the concept struggled to take off and the chain has never made a profit. Last year losses increased to £1.9m on sales of £50m. Christmas trading was also poor, with the company blaming aggressive price competition on toys.

The sale would be welcomed in the City, which sees the success of Boots the Chemist is being held back by losses in other areas.

Storehouse would be expected to change the store

Tony Shiret, retail analyst at BZW, said: "There is logic to the deal. It would give more scale to Mothercare and it would have greater buying power than Boots. Childrens World is a bit of an irrelevance to Boots and if they sold it, it would show a determination to get rid of some of the other underperforming businesses."

Storehouse would be expected to change the store

names to Mothercare, which already has more than 260 branches, and derive other benefits from economies of scale.

Mothercare has been a star performer for Storehouse. Its profits jumped by 12.0 per cent to £9.3m in the six months to October. However, Christmas trading was disappointing, with management blaming a difficult market. Storehouse shares closed down 1p at 293p.

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Stagecoach bids £40m for GMBS

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

More than 2,000 Manchester bus workers found themselves £9,000 better off yesterday when Stagecoach, Britain's biggest bus company, offered £40.7m for the south Manchester bus operation, GMBS.

The valuation of around £50m, taking into account GMBS's debts of around £10m, is more than double the £20m offered by Stagecoach two years ago when Manchester's two bus companies were privatised. The company was sold to a management-employee buy-out team for £25m - and staff who took 1,000 £1 shares will now get £10 for each share.

Stagecoach say that the main purpose of the placing is to cut borrowings and contribute to acquisition costs. The placing is not conditional on the successful completion of the purchase of GMBS. Derek Scott, finance director of Stagecoach, said: "It seems we considerably underestimated when we first tried to acquire GMBS."

chester and has around 750 buses and coaches. It reported an operating profit of £4.9m last year and profit before tax of £2.9m on a turnover of £51.2m last year.

Stagecoach is confident that the bid, unlike many of its others, will not be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Employees will be offered 577 new Stagecoach ordinary shares for every 200 GMBS shares they hold.

Since 49 per cent of the company is in the hands of the venture capital houses which are expected to recoup their investment and profit, Stagecoach is seeking financing of £19.9m by offering 6m shares which are being placed by Noble Grossart and UBS at 331p per share.

Stagecoach say that the main purpose of the placing is to cut borrowings and contribute to acquisition costs. The placing is not conditional on the successful completion of the purchase of GMBS. Derek Scott, finance director of Stagecoach, said: "It seems we considerably underestimated when we first tried to acquire GMBS."

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100		Dow Jones*		Nikkei					
Index	Close	Day's							



COMMENT
'If you haven't already made your pile out of this admittedly seductive metal, don't bother. You've missed the boat'

The rush is over for the ever-ready gold bugs

Say what you will about gold bugs, one thing is certain: you can't stamp them out. The sudden surge in the gold price this year to a five-year high has brought them out of the woodwork again with a vengeance. For inflation hawks, a runaway gold price is a sign of trouble ahead. For commodity hawks, it is a sign of future gains to come. In reality, the rise of over \$20 in January to breach the \$400 barrier is likely to be a speculative spike. If you haven't already made your pile out of this admittedly seductive metal, don't bother. You've missed the boat.

The main physical markets that move the gold price nowadays are in the developing world, particularly the Far East, where consumers buy gold in high carat jewellery as a hedge against political uncertainty and high inflation. According to the World Gold Council, demand grew sharply in 1995, hitting an all-time high in the developing world in the third quarter.

But then there are statistics and statistics. According to Andy Smith, precious metals analyst at UBS, demand fell sharply in key Far Eastern markets between the first and second halves of 1995. Meanwhile, South Africa stepped up its sales in a big way. He calculates that the resulting shortfall in demand over supply was as high as 500 tonnes, or a sixth of total annual demand.

Even if the fundamentals of physical demand and supply were more promising, the overall economic background casts a long shadow over those hoping for a return

to the glory days. Sixteen years ago, the price of gold peaked at an all-time high of \$850 an ounce. But that was after the second oil price shock and accompanying surge in global inflation. The disinflationary 1990s could hardly be more different from the inflationary 1970s. Then, inflation surprised by surpassing expectations, now it surprises by coming in below expectations.

With real interest rates uncomfortably high – rather than negative as they were in the 1970s – there is no point in holding gold other than the hope of piggy-backing off the speculative fun of the big American hedge funds. A further problem is posed by the massive overhang of central bank holdings – worth 12 times annual gold purchases. Fortunately for gold bugs, central bankers are a cautious lot, as distanced to dump their hoard on the open market as they are to add to it. Even so, these holdings amount to a powerful buffer to the gold price; the moment it moves much above \$400, anyone hoping for a continued gold rush is looking for fool's gold.

Hot air does not mean Branson has won

Hot air alone, even when it comes all the way from Marrakesh, will not be enough to win Richard Branson the franchise to build and operate the high-speed Channel Tunnel rail link, the choicest and biggest project so

far to emerge from the Government's ailing, all-singing, all-dancing Private Finance Initiative. This doesn't stop him hoping, however. As Mr Branson ascends into the stratosphere in his round-the-world balloon, we are being subjected to a customary blast of the stuff. Yes, we've won, he announced in the weekend press on behalf of the Virgin consortium, London & Continental Railways, and you never know, he may be right. The problem is, he usually isn't in cases like this. There were similar claims ahead of both the National Lottery and Channel 5 franchises. Poor Mr Branson. He is the perpetual bridesmaid, bidding for everything half way decent that falls from the Government's lap, but somehow or other never making it to the alter. Is he finally going to get there this time?

Certainly he is in with a better chance than ever before, if for no other reason that there are only two bidders left in the race. But he is not yet there, according to the Department of Transport yesterday. Eurotunnel, the rival consortium (BICC, Trafalgar House, Seaboard, HSBC and NatWest), also believes it has won. The truth of the matter is that no decision has yet been taken, though one is imminent. The Virgin consortium has got marketing know-how and some experience of operational transport systems going for it, but its financing looks on the dodgy side.

As for the claim that London & Continental will be leapfrogging its way into the FTSE 100 with a project-funding stock market float, anyone with Eurotunnel tucked away for a rainy day at £10 a share knows it will not. Coming from a man who when he took Virgin private eight years ago swore blind he would never again have anything to do with the City and the stock market, it is also a bit rich.

But may he win, who knows? One thing is for sure, however. It won't be done on the back of a swashbuckling press campaign. With anything between £1bn and £3bn of public money at stake, ministers are not going to allow themselves to be swung by sentiment alone. Eurotunnel also has its drawbacks, not least that it is the contractor-dominated consortium of the type that originally gave birth to Eurotunnel. But provided it comes up with a credible bid involving the higher transfer of risk from public to private sector and the lower level of public subsidy, it will beat Mr Branson, whatever his charms.

German bankers can't stay away from the City

Those German bankers just cannot keep their fingers off London. Yesterday's purchase of Panmure Gordon, the stockbroking firm, by Westdeutsche Landesbank may be modest when set against the vast sums Deutsche and Dresdner are pouring into the City to set up bases from which to pursue their global investment banking ambitions. But it is very definitely in the same mould,

business

underlining London's pre-eminent role as the financial centre of Europe.

Notwithstanding the tribulations of the Stock Exchange, the fact is that as far as in international investment banking is concerned, the City is thriving. London is still in effect the only place in Europe with a dynamic deal-making financial culture, and despite the advances made by rival Continental houses, a proper feel for equity markets. This is the Achilles heel of German bankers, who still only feel at home with debt. Panmure Gordon is very much a second division broker player, and largely UK focused. But its size fits in neatly with WestLB's more targeted style of expansion, and should provide a solid base for a European-wide equities strategy.

As the third largest German bank, WestLB does not suffer from any shortage of cash. But unlike Deutsche and Dresdner it does not see itself as punching with the Wall Street giants. It wants to build a more specialised international investment banking business.

For Panmure this should be good news, providing the capital fire-power for expansion. The financial clout was also there with Nationsbank, the previous owner, but the sense of strategic development was not. The price involved, believed to be around £35m, is peanuts for a business of Nationsbank's size, but it can now concentrate on building up its preferred capital markets business in London.

Rates challenge: Motor insurer trawls for funds with launch of phone-based account as big banks report a sharp decline in lending

Direct Line moves into instant access

NIC CICUTI

Direct Line, the UK's largest motor insurer, yesterday announced a further expansion of its growing financial services operation by launching a telephone-based instant access account.

The insurer's initiative is aimed at attracting the funds needed to underpin its increasingly successful mortgage-lending operation. It will also help to hold back the relentless downward spiral in the amount paid to savers caused by the three successive waves of mortgage rate reductions.

Direct Line account-holders will be offered 4.6 per cent before tax on savings up to £10,000, rising to 6 per cent for deposits above £25,000. The company claimed yesterday its rates beat those offered from most other large banks or building societies.

In a further twist designed to capture accounts from entire family or groups of friends, the insurer offered them the chance to pool savings so they can receive interest at the higher rate. Up to six people will be al-

lowed to pool accounts, with interest on each deposit being calculated separately. Individual account-holders will be able to segment their savings into separate parts, such as holidays or home improvements.

Jim Spowart, managing director of Direct Line Financial Services, said: "Our commitment is to give customers the best value deal on all our products, including savings rates. Our low-cost operation allows us to provide a deal which will be difficult for banks and building societies to emulate."

Direct Line's move reflects its runaway success since being founded by Peter Wood, its chief executive, in 1985.

The company has since expanded from its motor insurance base, which has 1.9 million customers, into home and contents cover, term assurance and personal loans.

In the process, Mr Wood has become one of the best-paid chief executives, earning bonuses of up to £18m a year until Royal Bank of Scotland, which part-owns Direct Line, bought out his bonus scheme for £24m in 1993.

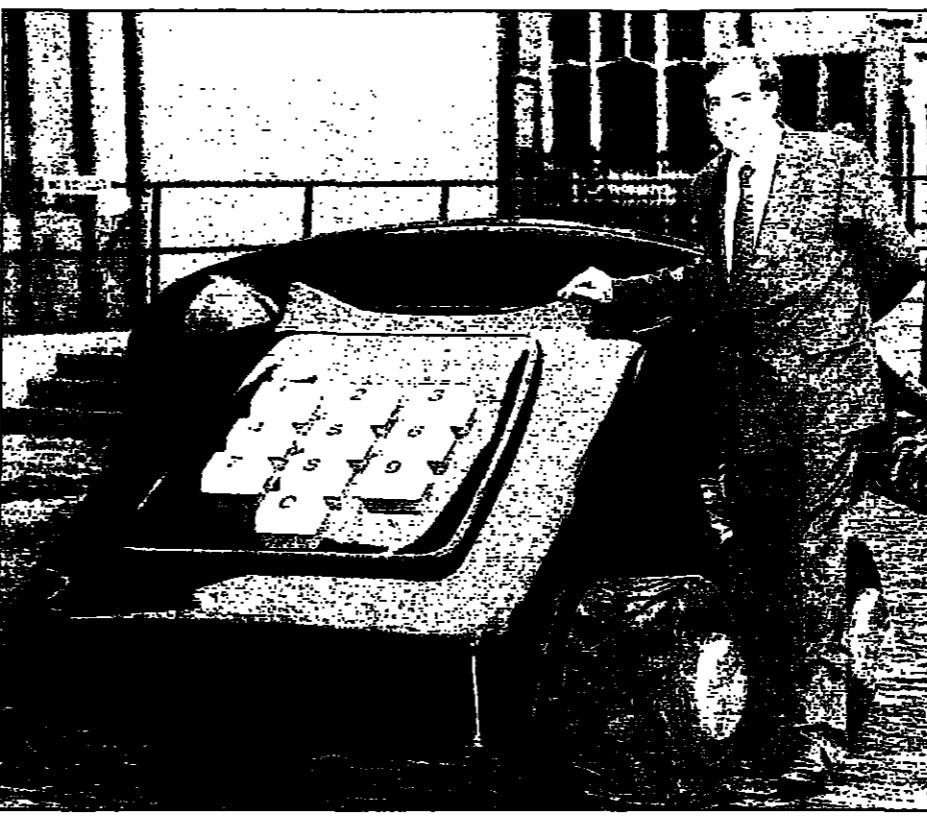
The firm's mortgage arm, launched 10 months ago, has lent £210m, financed until now by borrowing from money markets. Direct Line's venture into banking mirrors that of building societies, which finance much of their lending from the savings they attract.

A Direct Line spokeswoman said yesterday that it aimed to enter into a head-to-head contest with banks and building societies for their accounts by offering better rates than rivals.

However, according to MoneyFacts, a statistical service giving details of the best savings rates, Portman Building Society's instant access account yesterday offered 4.8 per cent gross on savings above £100, against a minimum savings level of £1,000 with Direct Line.

Teachers Building Society's Bullion Share account offers 5.55 per cent on deposits above £500, while Co-operative Bank's Pathfinder account pays 5.37 per cent on deposits above £5,000.

Direct Line customers will be able to move funds in and out of their accounts by calling the company between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday.



Groundbreaker: Peter Wood, who earned £18m-a-year bonuses from Direct Line

£100m private finance fund established

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

Prisons, hospitals and roads are among the possible investments for a new £100m City fund announced yesterday.

Innisfree PFI Fund said yesterday that it hoped to participate in up to £3bn of projects under the Government's private finance initiative. It claimed to be the first investment vehicle set up specifically to invest in PFI projects.

The fund has raised £50m initial capital from two leading investment institutions, Hermes Investment Management, which is acting as sponsor, and AMP Asset Management. The plan is to raise the same again from other institutions by April.

Roger Brooke, chairman of Innisfree, said the new fund could eventually participate in £3bn to £4bn of the £26bn of projects the Government has said could be included in the PFI.

Innisfree has drawn up a list of 45 PFI projects worth almost £4bn which it describes as potential investment opportunities.

They include two £70m prisons, at Bridgend and Fazakerley, the £250m Civil Aviation air traffic control centre, the £100m Edinburgh Royal Infirmary project, the £190m A1-M1 link road and the £200m refurbishment of the Treasury building in Whitehall.

Mr Brooke, who is also chairman of the management buyout firm Candover, said the plan was to invest up to 25 per cent in the equity of consortia set up with construction and other specialist companies involved in PFI work. Because the consortia tended to be highly geared, with most of the finance from bank loans rather than equity, the initial £50m could generate £1.5-£2bn in project value, and twice that if the fund reaches its £100m target, he said.

The Treasury has been heavily criticised for a slow start to the whole PFI programme, and one of the many factors blamed for this is a shortage of capital among construction and civil engineering companies to invest in new projects. The Treasury said it welcomed the new fund.

Alistair Ross-Grover, head of Hermes, is a member of the Treasury's private finance panel, which advises the Government on the PFI. Matthew Webber, an executive director of Innisfree, was seconded to the private finance panel last year from Kleinwort Benson.

David Metter, chief executive of Innisfree, said investments would be in projects worth between £25m and £400m.

He said PFI projects for the most part relied on well understood technologies and construction methods where risks were readily identifiable.



Clare Spottiswoode: Turns up competitive heat

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Clare Spottiswoode, the gas industry regulator, is calling for backdated price cuts for consumers should competition in the domestic market be delayed.

The move by Ms Spottiswoode comes as British Gas continues to insist that competition, due to start for 500,000 households in the South-west on 1 April, should be postponed.

Ms Spottiswoode, who argued that in the event of a delay, consumers who ultimately switch to lower-cost suppliers should have those prices backdated by a meter reading taken on 1 April.

She argues that British Gas and its rivals, which include offshore companies and electricity firms, should sort out the financial implications and that consumers should not be penalised.

Rivals such as Amecraza Hess plan to undercut the company by up to 15 per cent and so far British Gas has failed to say how it will respond. There are fears in the company that others will then continue to complain that delays are necessary.

A spokesman for TransCo, British Gas' pipeline arm, said 1 June was the earliest sensible date for competition to begin. Critics of the company say this could be the first of many efforts to put off the opening of the market the hope that it may

never happen. But Harry Moulson, TransCo's managing director, argues that postponement is the only way to ensure things are "hassle-free".

The row over the domestic market is one of a series of battles which British Gas faces with the regulator. Ms Spottiswoode is expected to intervene soon to block imminent increases in charges for other companies that need to use British Gas's pipes. At the same time, the watchdog is consulting on fundamental changes in the way the company is regulated as part of a review of British Gas price controls to be completed by the middle of the year. Separately,

large industrial users are calling on Ms Spottiswoode's office to investigate the company's policy of cutting supplies at times of high demand, including during the cold snap.

Many large users have contracts at low prices on condition that they can be interrupted when demand from other consumers soars.

Meanwhile, Moody's, the credit rating agency, has placed British Gas's debt under review for possible downgrade. Moody's said the review would focus on a number of factors, including the company's ongoing negotiations with producers.

Daiwa makes its US withdrawal

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Daiwa Bank, hit by a massive bond trading scandal last year in New York, is to pull out of the US by Thursday, handing over its operations to Sumitomo Bank. Daiwa said Sumitomo Bank would pay \$3.3bn (£2.2bn) for the loans and transactions and an additional \$65m for rights to business at 15 of Daiwa's US branches and a Daiwa trust bank unit in New York. Daiwa had a total of \$4.3bn in loans and other transactions in the US. The outstanding \$1bn would be transferred to Daiwa's parent body in Japan.

Daiwa, chief executive of Innisfree, said investments would be in projects worth between £25m and £400m.

He said PFI projects for the most part relied on well understood technologies and construction methods where risks were readily identifiable.

In November, the US authorities announced a 24-count criminal indictment against Daiwa, covering charges of conspiracy to defraud the Federal Reserve Bank, mail and wire fraud and falsifying bank records, and ordered it to close its US operations by February.

Senior Daiwa officials are allegedly implicated in shifting hundreds of millions of dollars around the world to hide the \$1.1bn losses run up by the bond trader Toshihiko Iguchi. Daiwa has vowed to fight the charges.

Sumitomo said last November that it would help Daiwa to close down its US operations, and the presidents of the two banks said they would consider a merger in the future.

IN BRIEF

Capel and Montagu merged

James Capel and Samuel Montagu, two of the best-known names in UK financial markets, are to be merged into a new entity, HSBC Investment Banking. Announcing the biggest shake-up of its investment banking operations since it bought the stockbroking firm James Capel in 1984, HSBC said the move would eliminate confusion and highlight the powerful parent. HSBC said it would drop the James Capel and Samuel Montagu names for Continental European business, opting instead for HSBC Investment Banking. Capel and Montagu will be preserved for business within the UK but will be prefixed with HSBC. Keith Harris, the former head of Montagu, will become the chief executive of HSBC Investment Bank.

MCI links up with Microsoft

MCI and Microsoft yesterday unveiled a joint venture to supply on-line and Internet services, the companies said. Initially, the deal will permit MCI to distribute the Microsoft Network over its telephone network. The companies also intend to develop additional on-line services. As a result of the venture, MCI is reducing its stake in a competing on-line service jointly run by News Corp, Rupert Murdoch's media holding company. MCI said it would recruit additional partners to join in.

Welsh Water wins 75% of Swalec

Welsh Water has received acceptances of its offer for South Wales Electricity in respect of 69.5 million Swalec shares or about 74.8 per cent of the company. Welsh now owns or has acceptances representing almost 88 per cent of Swalec and has declared the offer unconditional except for the planned listing of the new Welsh Water ordinary shares and the new Welsh Water preference shares.

Quality Software gets softer

Shares in Quality Software Products, the accounting software supplier, lost 30 per cent of their value yesterday when the company warned that its current year's profits would not meet market expectations. The company blamed the warning on a delay in the signing of some large contracts and a staff re-organisation. The shares crashed 218p to 490p.

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Output leap eases Japanese recession fears

DIANE COYLE
Economics Correspondent

Fears of continuing recession in Japan receded yesterday after separate figures showed both an unexpected jump in industrial output last month and a

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN
Edited by Magnus Grimond

The moment of truth for insurers

The UK composites are less than a month away from their reporting season and all the indications are that results for 1995 will beat what was already a bumper year in 1994. The current icy temperatures notwithstanding, recent benevolent weather conditions and lower claims mean that profits will again be led by the domestic market for non-life business. But, as ever, share prices are already looking ahead to the downturn and the sector has only barely outpaced the rest of the market over the past year.

In the past, insurance companies have vied with banks as the Neanderthals of British industry. Typically, a downswing in the insurance cycle saw underwriting losses soar as rates tumbled, a situation which often combined with a decline in investment returns to put a double squeeze on the composites' profits. Only their spread of income, principally from life insurance, has helped to support profits during these lean times.

But with 1995 expected to mark a peak year of profitability, the optimists believe that the current cycle could be different from every other in recent experience. There are two main factors said to have had a profound effect:

Firstly, in the key UK market - which our table shows remain an area of critical importance to the big five insurers - the big losses of the early part of the decade are unlikely to be repeated. The argument runs that previous problems resulted from a rare combination of unusual subsidence claims after very dry weather and the mortgage indemnity crisis created by the housing market collapse of the late 1980s.

Apart from those circumstances being unlikely to be repeated, the insurance companies have moved to correct some poor rating practices. As anyone with a mortgage will know, buildings insurance rates are highly individualised, being based on the claims experience of particular streets, and much higher than in the past.

This new level of sophistication is the second reason the bulls believe insurers will have a better recession than in the past. Companies can react more quickly and precisely to factors affecting pricing.

The problem with these arguments is that, like generals, insurance companies tend to base their future strategy on the last war and have almost certainly failed to anticipate the next disaster. But for those brave enough to believe in the principle that past ex-

perience is no guide to the future, Nikko Europe is suggesting that General Accident looks attractive for the quality of its UK business, while Sun Alliance is a good defensive choice, bolstered by its greater ability to cut costs.

Atal weighs down Bullough

If Trevor Bond, Bullough's chief executive, has nightmares they are probably based in France and feature office furniture. The diversified engineering group's French office furniture division, Atal, has been a persistent headache and after three restructurings in five years the jury is still out on whether the company can be put right.

Atal caused Bullough to issue a profit warning in September and wrecked the decent performance elsewhere in refrigeration, heating and engineering revealed yesterday. Group profits for the year to March were down 17 per cent to £14.5m. Atal recorded an operating loss of £4.5m, with a further £2.2m of provisions to cover the latest round of re-structuring.

Atal's problems have been caused by low growth, a freeze on government spending and a rise in raw material prices. Production problems in the factories have added to the difficulties.

Bullough has wielded the big stick, but admits that if the company cannot be turned around it may have to be sold. It has brought in new management, cut jobs by 10 per cent and improved productivity. Steel prices are also starting to come down.

The problems of Atal overshadowed better performances in Bullough's mixed bag of other businesses. The UK office furniture division did well, boosted by the Pentos acquisition last year, which contributed £1.6m in the eight months.

The refrigeration business also increased profits thanks to higher sales of chilled cabinets to supermarkets and fast-food restaurants last year. However, the hot summer dented profits at the heating division.

Further reshaping of Bullough is likely, with the addition of an engineering business to balance the portfolio top of the shopping list. But with gearing of 45 per cent the company does not have much room for manoeuvre. Atal losses have taken their toll on the shares, which hit 190p last year but fell a further 5p yesterday to 105p. With analysts cutting this year's profit forecasts from £22m to around £18.5m, the shares are on a forward rating of 10. Cheap, but not without risk.

Bookings sag at Eurocamp

The woes of the holidays market were underlined yesterday by results from Eurocamp. The holiday group's bookings for this summer are down 20 per cent on last year as customers wait for a late booking and the chance of a discount. The group says it sold only 5-10 per cent of its holidays at cut prices last year, but some of those discounts were as high as a third.

It has also found margins squeezed as an increasing number of parents choose to avoid the higher prices during the school holidays. The company is considering "flattening" its pricing structure.

A further problem for Eurocamp is that three-quarters of its self-drive camping holidays are to France. Holidays there have been affected by the strong French franc, while there has also been a shift in sentiment caused by last year's strikes and the nuclear war in the South Pacific.

This contributed to yesterday's 21p slide in Eurocamp's share price to 230p, barely above the 220p issue price when it came to the market in 1991.

Yesterday's slump was due principally to the bad news on bookings. The results themselves came as little surprise after the company had issued a profits warning in July.

Profits for the year to March were up from £8.7m to £9.3m on sales of £87m. Superbreak, the short-break specialist acquired for £21m last year, proved the star turn, contributing £1.2m of profits on sales of £10.7m. The acquisition underlines the wisdom of reducing reliance on the summer sales period. Stripping out Superbreak, Eurocamp's underlying profit fell from £8.7m to £8.1m.

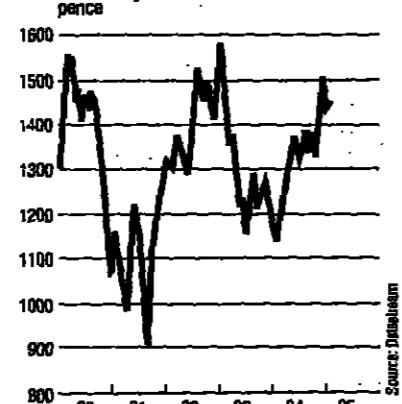
Analysts have cut forecasts from £12m to £10.5m for the current year. With the shares at their lowest for two years, they are at a significant discount to the market on a forward rating of 11. But with the tour operator market clouded by so much uncertainty, the shares look a weak hold.

Composite insurers: at a glance

	Current share price, pence	Estimated 1995 net asset pence	Estimated 1995 gross yield, %
Commercial Union	620	583	5.7
General Accident	663	631	6.0
GRE	264	241	4.4
Royal	383	374	5.1
Sun alliance	379	293	5.8

Source: Nikkei Europe

Share price



Source: Nikkei Europe

UK non life premiums and profit as a % of the whole

	Premiums	Pre-tax profit
Commercial Union	39.7	63.4
General Accident	35.7	79.0
GRE	39.7	72.3
Royal	48.7	77.9
Sun alliance	49.9	82.0

Source: Nikkei Europe

winner, Cott said that the Barker's branding illustrated something in common. When you phone them, the character and history of "Billy Barker, a ruddy-cheeked publican, sailor and fond tenor who landed in Canada during the Klondike gold rush". The ad copy tells of Barker's accidental discovery of the drink after a bottle of vodka is knocked into a pitcher of cola.

Cott insisted yesterday that there was no trademark problem with the building society product. Trademarks are listed under classes, and beverages are in a separate class to financial services products, a spokesman said. A spokeswoman for the Halifax said that, while they had not heard of this new drink before, there "didn't seem to be a problem". Bottoms up.

Croatia and Slovenia are planning bond issues through London following the outbreak of peace in the former Yugoslavia. Heading Croatia's programme is the intriguingly named finance minister, Mr Bozo Prka.

John Willcock CITY DIARY

Out of the kitchen and into a very hot seat

The Chancellor has appointed Jill Rutter to be his press secretary, in succession to Andrew Hudson. Ms Rutter, 39, was described by one colleague yesterday as "a bit of a blue stocking - one of the cleverest people in the Treasury. Her appointment reflects the importance of the job over the next 12 months."

After Oxford she became private secretary to the Chief Secretary between 1986 and 1988, then worked at the Number 10 Policy Unit from 1992 to 1994. Another Whitehall insider said:

"She's been in the kitchen with the heater on full blast."

Meanwhile the well regarded Mr Hudson, described as "earnest" and "dourish", will return to a policy job in the Treasury. Both are advised to move fast; apparently the current "downsizing" of the Treasury means desks are at a premium.

The central banks of Uruguay, Argentina and a number of other Latin



Yesterday will go down in history as the day the National Grid failed to fail. Prompted by dire press predictions that the entire nation would suffer power cuts if the cold weather continued, six TV crews and a host of hacks crowded into the Grid's control room at Wokingham, Surrey, ready to watch the catastrophe unfold. Their creative skills were

tested to the limits as they had to tell the shivering millions that the supply was holding up quite well after all, but there might possibly be a power cut later. The heavily outnumbered National Grid engineers sat

thumbing their thumbs as the hacks described to camera how they were "battling to keep Britain on-line".

Photograph: Brian Harris

Railtrack sale gets into its stride

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

The campaign to sell Railtrack to the City for up to £2bn got into its stride yesterday with the first full scale meeting between the company and institutional investors.

About 80 specialists from investment management firms were briefed at SBC Warburg's conference centre by Sir George Young, the transport secretary, and Bob Horton, the chairman of Railtrack.

This will be followed today by a seminar to brief share shop specialists. The government said earlier this month it had decided not to set up a full scale share information office along the lines of other larger privatisations and it plans to concentrate private investor marketing through share shops.

At yesterday's meeting Mr Horton was accompanied by John Swift, the rail regulator, Roger Salmon, who runs the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (and is charged with sell-

ing the train operating companies) and Wynne Ellis, head of SBC Warburg's Railtrack analysis team. The investment bank is global co-ordinator to the sale.

Sir George said that 32 rail

businesses with turnover of £2bn had been sold so far and 30 companies with turnover of £3bn were on the market. He added: "The responses from the private sector, from major companies and leading financiers around the world have confirmed our critics."

Railtrack's advisers believe

that most of the building blocks are in place for the sale of the track infrastructure company for £1.5-£2bn, after the cost of performance penalties and the size of the company's share in the property profits were clarified last week.

With the interim results also

out of the way last week, the sale is scheduled to go ahead in May, less than two months after the end of the financial year in March. The main financial problem remaining is the scale of the debt write-off.

The market last week responded by pushing up the market as a safe haven from Euro-chaos. Then at the weekend, in response to these forecasts, there were a clutch of political speeches, some asserting that the single currency must go ahead on schedule, others that it could be delayed without damage.

Yesterday the scene shifted to Brussels, the first ministerial meeting since the deterioration of German and French public finances became evident. There it was the turn of Malcolm Rifkind to stir the pot by saying in public what he had previously said in private: that the markets last week responded by pushing up the market as a safe haven from Euro-chaos. Then at the weekend, in response to these forecasts, there were a clutch of political speeches, some asserting that the single currency must go ahead on schedule, others that it could be delayed without damage.

On the other hand, if the 1999 date were not met, you would make a separate set of judgements: how long the delay might be, whether delay would scupper the project, and perhaps the runners and riders for start dates of say, 2002 and 2005.

There is nothing wrong with that approach, and it is useful because even if you give quite a low probability to the start date of 1999, you tend to find that the chance of there being some sort of EMU by 2005 is quite large. People considering buying 10-year or longer-dated German bonds needs to be aware that they will probably be repaid in another currency. Indeed if investors are really determined to be repaid in the same currency as they are lending, they really should stick to dollars or yen.

Even buyers of gilts are not certain to be repaid in sterling,

but the three big economic zones, showing that the supply is most restricted at the moment in the US, has increased rapidly in Japan, and is continuous and considerable in Europe. On this very simplistic basis, dollar-denominated bonds ought, on the face of it, to be attractive compared with Japanese and European ones.

One should also look at the stock as well as the flow, at the size of the European public sector debt in relation to gross domestic product compared with Japan and the US, and at the different levels within Europe. Allow for the different age structure of Japan and the US and the debt levels are not vastly different.

Most European countries, on the other hand, either have very high debt levels (Belgium, Italy), or they have rapidly ageing populations (France, Germany, Italy again). Since economic textbooks point out that the ability to service a

debt depends on the tax-gathering powers of a government, age structure is very important to the ability of countries to honour its debts.

In so far as sterling ought to be a safe haven, it is not because the pound seems likely to exclude itself from the "Euro" game: it is because, for the next 20 years, the UK has a significantly less favourable age structure than the other larger European nations.

Look at those big issues, those that determine creditworthiness rather than current fashions in economic or political thinking. The right-hand graph shows just how volatile the crucial relationship between French and German interest rates has been over the last three years: whenever the franc is weak, the French authorities have to jack up interest rates. But the reality of the relationship between the two currencies has hardly changed.

I think there is a moral here. We do not know what will happen to EMU. But if investors are risk-averse, they steer clear of the whole thing and invest in good old dollars.

Even buyers of gilts are not certain to be repaid in sterling,

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See pages 18-19

section two

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FT-SE 250	4,089.1	+3.5							
FT-SE 350	1,854.9	+0.3							
SEAQ VOLUME	688.6 million shares,								
	34,063 bargains								
Gilt's Index	95.46	-0.16							
SHARE SPOTLIGHT									
Abbey National	700	share price, pence							
High	700	Low	600	Price	650	Change	700	Yield	700
700	600	500	400	300	200	100	0	+	-
Source: Bloomberg	J J A S O N D								

Airtours close to deal with Carnival cruise giant

Final agreement is understood to have been reached for Carnival Corporation, the world's largest cruise ship operator, to take a near 30 per cent stake in Airtours, the second largest holiday company in the UK.

Airtours first admitted it was in talks the week before last, following a sharp rise in its share price. A City source said yesterday that the deal documents were closed to be signed. The deal will mostly involve the issue of new shares, and be accompanied by a partial offer to existing shareholders. Airtours, valued at almost £500m, is a very tightly held stock. David Crossland, chairman and founder, owns 30 million of the 115 million in issue, and there are several large institutional holders.

Airtours may well accompany any announcement on Carnival with a separate deal to buy Spies of Denmark, as part of its concerted push to expand in Europe by establishing a firm base in Scandinavia. Speculation that the deal might be imminent did not start circulating until the market had closed for business yesterday. By the close of dealings, shares in Airtours were trading 2p down at 424p largely reflecting disappointing results from Eurocamp. The specialist camping operator caused disappointment by reporting a 20 per cent decline in bookings for this summer.

Investors were wrong-footed by the news despite bad news on holiday bookings by every other tour operator in recent weeks. Eurocamp's shares plunged 21p to 230p, and almost one million were dealt.

First Choice, the UK's third largest tour operator, dropped 3p to 71p.

The market was largely bereft of gossip yesterday and share prices generally spent much of the session marking



MARKET REPORT

JOHN SHEPHERD

time. The FT-SE 100 share index bounded around between plus and minus 7 points, and finished virtually bang in the middle at 3,734.6 – a fall of 0.1 of a point on the day.

Investors paid very little attention to the record breaking antics on the other side of the Atlantic. Trading on Wall Street yesterday opened on a firm footing following Friday night's 55 point surge in the Dow Jones index to yet another peak of 5,271.75.

A lack of real takeover action and fading hopes of fresh cuts in interest rates appear to be keeping the lid on the London market. Gilt edged stocks recorded losses extending to

a chilly wind also blew across the financials pitch.

quarter of a point. Volume trading yesterday struggled to reach 688 million, given that there was some very chunky business conducted in several of the leaders. The most actively traded included British Gas, 21 million, Lloyds TSB, 32 million, and 12 million each British Steel and in Forte, which disappears from the Footsie tomorrow.

British Gas dropped 4p to 236p. Complaints against the company have doubled, and it is becoming embroiled in a fierce row over its right to cut off power stations amid one of the coldest winters in decades.

A chilly wind also blew across the financials pitch.

Worries about an all-out war among mortgage lenders took Abbey National down 18p to 614p. The fall wiped £257m off the company's value.

The main fear is that Nationwide – the country's second largest lender – is on the verge of slashing mortgage rates and simultaneously raising interest rates for savers. This will put the squeeze on building societies that have turned banks-like the Abbey National – because such moves will eat into profits and limit their scope to raise dividend payments to shareholders.

The threat of a mortgage war prompted analysts James Capel and SBC Warburg to switch their investment recommendations for Abbey yesterday from buy to hold.

Away from the gloom, several second liners registered reasonable gains on sustained and fresh bid speculation. Lloyds Chemists sprinted 24p

TAKING STOCK

□ Oei Hong Leong, the Chinese tycoon, is believed to have tightened his grip on Bolton Group and is looking to use the tiny property investment company as a vehicle to buy telecom and cable firms. More than 17 million Bolton shares, up 2p to 25p, were traded. It is understood Giant Point Developments, its holding company, has increased its stake in Bolton from 27 to 28 per cent by buying shares from other directors.

□ Trading volume in VideoLogic was brisk, with more than 1.6 million shares dealt by the close of business. There was good sign that the company was close to signing a couple of big supply deals for its multimedia computer chips. One of the deals is said to be with IBM. Shares in VideoLogic firmed 0.5p to a year's high of 68p.

Share Price Data									
Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, expressed by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, including exceptional items. Other details: At right is ex-dividend date. Ext All United Securities Market is suspended. Source: Finstat.									
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The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from Sacs. Simply dial 0891 223 333, followed by the 4-digit code printed next to each share to access the latest financial reports. Dial 0891 223 333 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.									
FT-SE 100 - Real-time 00 Sterling Rates 04 Privatisation issues 20 UK Stock Market Report 01 Button Report 05 01 Water Share 30 UK Company News 03 03 01 Wall Street Report 00 01 Energy Shares 40 Foreign Exchange 03 03 Tokyo Market 21 High Street Banks 41									
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Market leaders Top 20 volumes									
Stock	Value/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00
Lloyds TSB	5000000	Abbey National	900000	Lobachev	20000	Cable & Wireless	500000	BT	500000
British Gas	2000000	Hanson	500000	National Grid	800000	Telecom	500000	BP	500000
Ford	200000	Bus Ech	800000	Sunbury	700000	MTI	500000	BTR	500000
British Steel	1000000	Gas Welcome	700000	MTS	500000	BBG	400000	BAA	400000
FT-SE 100 Index hour by hour									
Open	2795.0	Up 52							
Close	2794.4	Up 47							
14.00	3733.0	down 17							
12.00	3729.2	down 65							
10.00	3722.0	down 27							
14.00 3732.7 down 17									
12.00 3728.5 up 15									
10.00 3722.0 down 59									
Close 3724.8 down 01									
FT-SE 100 - Real-time 00 Sterling Rates 04 Privatisation issues 20									
UK Stock Market Report 01 Button Report 05 01 Water Share 30									
UK Company News 03 03 01 Wall Street Report 00 01 Energy Shares 40									
Foreign Exchange 03 03 Tokyo Market 21 High Street Banks 41									
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Lloyds TSB	5000000	Abbey National	900000	Lobachev	20000	Cable & Wireless	500000	BT	500000
British Gas	2000000	Hanson	500000	National Grid	800000	Telecom	500000	BP	500000
Ford	200000	Bus Ech	800000	Sunbury	700000	MTI	500000	BTR	500000
British Steel	1000000	Gas Welcome	700000	MTS	500000	BAA	400000		
Other Services									
Stock	Value/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00
Spa Estates	1000000	Salad Agents	600000	Spa Estates	600000	Spa Estates	600000	Spa Estates	600000
Unilever	5000000	Unilever	2000000	Unilever	2000000	Unilever	2000000	Unilever	2000000
Woolworths	1000000	Woolworths	1000000	Woolworths	1000000	Woolworths	1000000	Woolworths	1000000
Telecommunications									
Stock	Value/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00	Stock	Volumes/00
BT	5000000	BT	2000000	BT	2000000	BT	2000000	BT	2000000
EE	1000000	EE	1000000	EE	1000000	EE	1000000	EE	1000000

unit trusts/data

Foreign Exchange Rates																
STERLING								DOLLAR								
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-MARK	
US	15079	11-8	30-27	1000	11-3	1-5	15750	Niger	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Canada	20083	12-8	43-31	12756	12-3	1-5	12325	Costa Rica	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Germany	22005	11-4	55-145	14559	11-5	45-95	15525	Denmark	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
France	22004	11-4	30-35	12003	11-5	5-75	11702	Iceland	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Italy	24332	11-7	72-75	22-222	12266	11-7	24	15472	Japan	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250
ECU	22222	11-7	55-59	12266	11-7	55-59	11702	Malta	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Belgium	40201	11-9	55-65	12500	11-9	55-65	12025	Portugal	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Denmark	67375	11-5	55-59	12500	11-5	55-59	12025	Spain	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Netherlands	22002	11-7	55-59	12500	11-7	55-59	12025	Sweden	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Ireland	63078	11-7	35-45	12500	11-7	35-45	12025	Switzerland	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Norway	63078	11-7	35-45	12500	11-7	35-45	12025	Australia	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Spain	63078	11-7	35-45	12500	11-7	35-45	12025	Hong Kong	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Sweden	63078	11-7	35-45	12500	11-7	35-45	12025	Malaysia	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
United Kingdom	63078	11-7	35-45	12500	11-7	35-45	12025	Singapore	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Saudi Arabia	56524	11-0	35-45	12500	11-0	35-45	12025	United Arab Emirates	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Singapore	23350	11-0	35-45	12500	11-0	35-45	12025	Other	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	1250	
Note: Forward rates quoted to four or five digits. Premium/Discount rates quoted to two digits. *Forward rates quoted to four or five digits. Premium/Discount rates quoted to two digits. **Forward exchange rates as of 06/07 123 3033. Call cost 30p per minute (Singapore) and 40p other areas. For the latest forward exchange rates call 0800 123 3033.																
OTHER SPOT RATES																
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	
Argentina	15081	85000	Niger	12500	12500	Angola	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Australia	15750	12500	Colombia	12500	12500	Bahrain	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Brasil	14760	12500	Chile	12500	12500	Barbados	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
China	12545	12500	Costa Rica	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Egypt	13078	12500	Croatia	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Finland	13078	12500	Cuba	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Greece	12575	12500	Cyprus	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Holland	12575	12500	Czechoslovakia	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Iceland	12575	12500	Denmark	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Ireland	12575	12500	Djibouti	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Malta	12575	12500	El Salvador	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
New Zealand	22222	12500	Equador	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Singapore	23350	12500	Guatemala	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Saudi Arabia	56524	12500	Honduras	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Singapore	23350	12500	Hungary	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
United Kingdom	63078	12500	Indonesia	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Other	12575	12500	Iran	12500	12500	Bolivia	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	12500	
Tourist Rates																
Country	2 Boys	1 Boys	Country	2 Boys	1 Boys	Country	2 Boys	Country	2 Boys	1 Boys	Country	2 Boys	1 Boys	Country	2 Boys	
Australia/Dollar	10000	10000	France/France	74500	74500	Germany/German	122000	122000	122000	122000	122000	122000	122000	122000	122000	
Australia/Pound	142000	142000	Germany/Mark	127000	127000	Japan/Yen	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	
Canada/Dollar	442000	442000	Germany/Dollar	145000	145000	UK Pound	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	
Canada/Pound	127000	127000	UK Pound	140000	140000	Switzerland	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	
Denmark/Kroner	220000	220000	Switzerland	140000	140000	Switzerland	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	
Denmark/Kroner	220000	220000	Switzerland	140000	140000	Switzerland	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	
Finland/Krone	220000	220000	Switzerland	140000	140000	Switzerland	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	
Finland/Krone	220000	220000	Switzerland	140000	140000	Switzerland	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	140000	
Finland/Krone	220000	220000	Switzerland	140000	140000	Switzerland	140000	14								

Hodgson in Fogarty's slipstream

John Roberts meets the latest recruit to Superbikes who is out to make life uncomfortable for his Lancastrian neighbour, the reigning world champion

On an unfinished section of motorway – at the cobbled end of the network, comedians would say – it is possible to catch Carl Fogarty and Neil Hodgson training together for a duet which has become the talk of the motorcycle.

Fogarty is the world Superbike champion, the life and soul of Ducati for the past two years. Hodgson covets his title, having leapt into the saddle "Foggy" vacated on the Italian factory team when transferring to Honda.

There is little evidence of the rivalry between the 29-year-old Fogarty and his 22-year-old challenger, however, as they steer motocross bikes over the makings of the M65 extension in East Lancashire. Hodgson even borrows one of Fogarty's machines.

The sessions are a reminder of their beginnings riding over flat, muddy local fields as members of the Vale of Rosedale schoolboy motocross club. Darren Barton, 21, another graduate recently joined the Aprilia 125cc factory team, so there are now three professional racers living within eight miles of each other. "It must be something in the water," said Hodgson, who first rode motocross at the age of nine.

Since putting his 500cc grand prix career on hold to accept Ducati's offer of a two-year Superbike contract, Hodgson has become the focus of attention. He is about to embark on a world tour to test the machine before his contests with Fogarty and the rest over the 14 rounds of the title race, commen-

ting with the April meetings at Misano and Donington Park.

There are signs of a growing influence. A BMW 320, registration NSH 1 (the middle name is Stuart), a gift from one of his sponsors, a Yorkshire insurance broker, has replaced a Honda Civic in the drive of the farmhouse in Burnley where he resides with his parents and an older brother, Carl.

Although never doubting that he was destined to race motorcycles after being introduced to them by his father, Mark, a club level competitor, Hodgson used to supplement his riding by working as a £60 per week labourer. Last year he made £15,000 as a "privateer" on the 500cc circuit, then Ducati elevated him to six figures as a works rider. If he wins the world title, he could earn from £45m per year.

"At school I was a daydreamer," he said. "I was the boy staring out of the window thinking about the next motocross race, so obviously my results suffered. At 16, with just three C's [Art, Business Studies and English], I was left with a little bit of a dilemma: I had to find a job."

A friend told him that the building trade was "a bit of a laugh", which did not always prove to be the case during his two years on the sites. "I was really feeling quite small trying to carry the load," he recounted. "They only had to put two or three bricks in it and it was weighing me down."

"I was still working when I won the British 125cc championship. From being the man interviewed on television, squinting the champagne and having all these girls round me

and being a bit of a star, I'd be buck

carrying the load on a Monday morning after driving through the night to get home. And the guys at work didn't treat me any different."

I was the skinny, I got the red hot tea bag on the back of the neck every morning. But I'm not complaining, I'm glad I did that, because I appreciate the position I'm in now."

Hodgson's level-headedness, exemplified by his resistance of a strong temptation to treat himself to a Porsche – "I could buy one now, but I'm a sensible northerner and know that things could all go wrong" – is counterbalanced by a fiercely competitive nature and a talent that has drawn comparison to Barry Sheene.

"At school I was the captain of the football team, and I ended up fighting with my own players because they weren't giving 100 per cent. That's how passionate I was

about winning," Hodgson said. "I pulled out of grand prix, basically, because I wasn't offered the right bike to win."

British riders tend not to be first in line for the best factory 500cc machines on account of national opposition to cigarette advertising. In terms of sponsorship, the grand prix circuit is tobacco road.

"I'm pretty confident going into Superbikes," Hodgson added. "I don't think I'm going to go out there and win every race and be the man, because nobody's ever done that. But I believe that I could learn and be up there and certainly win a few races."

Fogarty is the man. According to Hodgson, the Blackburn rider is "seriously wealthy now, incredibly outspoken – he slags his own team off – and a little bit weird".

On a personal level, Hodgson has come to terms with his rival's personality. "Over the past 20 months

I've got to know Foggy a little bit better, but he's hard to have a conversation with." While respecting him as an opponent, he recognises the value of adding spice to the situation.

"Carl Fogarty, I'd say, was the third or fourth best motorcyclist in the world, in any cc, and I'm going to try to beat him. If I could win the world championship – and that's the plan – I'll be a big, big hot property, and everyone's going to want me."

It is developing into a "kick ass" rivalry? "It almost gets like that," Hodgson said. "We did a television interview and nearly ended up fighting. I said, 'Well, hopefully I'm going to win the championship, I'm on the best bike'. Then Foggy grabbed the mike and said, 'Yeah, but he isn't the best rider', and before we knew it we were arguing."

"And then Carl said probably one of the best things he's ever said. He said: 'Look, me and Neil, we aren't going to fall out with each other. We want to do well. If Neil wins one weekend, then he was the best man that weekend. And if I win the next weekend, then I'm the best man. All we want to do is kick some Australian ass and beat the Americans'."

Before that is possible, Hodgson must ensure that he is as comfortable on the Ducati as Fogarty was. "It takes weeks, and many, many stone heavier than Carl, and a lot taller, and there are thousands of permutations of the settings you can have on a bike."

His acquaintance with the Ducati began in San Marino a few days before Christmas, when he performed 45 laps and came within 1.5 seconds of the lap record on the Misano circuit. "I was pleased, considering it was a completely new bike and the conditions were so cold."

A road version of the red machine is on its way to Burnley for

Photograph: Simon Wilkinson

Hodgson's personal use. The last time he rode on the public highway was when he took his bike test at the age of 19.

"I was absolutely petrified," he recalled. "I already had a car licence and I was the British 125 champion at the time, but I would have failed if I hadn't spent two days at a training school learning to ride on the roads.

"Tell me to ride over a settee and I could do it because I've got balance, and that's what I do. But I had to learn to do all my 'life savers' every time I braked, otherwise they class you as being dead and fail you."

The guy who had to follow me on the test recognised me from photographs in *Motor Cycle News* and couldn't believe it, and I signed an autograph for the examiner after I passed."

His knees might have been knocking, but it was one occasion when they did not scrape the road.

Sublime potential in the novice ranks

Racing

JOHN COBB

The Cheltenham Festival's Sun Alliance Chase and Arkle Trophy have a surprisingly poor record in producing future Gold Cup and Champion Chase winners, but the list of entries published yesterday has a more productive function. Among the 61 entered for the Sun Alliance and 30 for the Arkle are several who have achieved little but are clearly expected to justify their entry fee in the six weeks before the Festival.

Those that catch the eye in the Sun Alliance are Highland

Jack, Chief Rager and Sorbiere. The first-named, who has the look of a chaser, was sent fencing by Andy Turnell after just one outing over hurdles. He made an impressive start

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Super Rocky (Lingfield 1.40)
NB: Blue Charm (Musselburgh 3.20)

when second to St Mellion Fairway at Lingfield but then crashed out early in a better race at Kempton next time. Nigel Twiston-Davies' Chief Rager was a good third to Jibber The

Scots produce cold comfort

Scottish turf has kept frost free and kept jump racing on the road, with yesterday's meeting at Ayr and today's card at Musselburgh (where there is a 7.30am precautionary inspection) supplying the only alternative to the sand tracks.

Many trainers were unhappy about the surface at Ayr, how-

Kibber on his only outing over fences, and Nick Henderson's Sorbiere who was similarly promising in his only chase start behind Nemuro.

In the Arkle, Henderson's Sublime Fellow, a faller at the last in Trying Again's Kempton race, looks interesting.

David Nicholson has an embarrassment of riches in the Sun Alliance with five entries. The Irish bookmakers Lam Cashman have already opened betting on the race and make Nicholson's St Melion Fairway, who also holds a Gold Cup entry, the best of the quintet at 7-1 behind Mr Mulligan on 6-1. Billygoat Gruff, Cell It A Day, Hill Of Fallow and King Lucifer complete his challenge.

Martin Pipe's ex-French mare Draborgie is entered for both novice events and Cashman has made her favourite, at 9-2 for the Arkle.

Arkle Trophy (Cheltenham, 12 March) **Liam Courtney**, 5-2 Lingfield, 7-1 Cheltenham, 9-1 Newbury, 11-1 Ascot, 12-1 Ascot, 13-1 Cheltenham, 14-1 Cheltenham, 15-1 Cheltenham, 16-1 Cheltenham, 17-1 Cheltenham, 18-1 Cheltenham, 19-1 Cheltenham, 20-1 Cheltenham, 21-1 Cheltenham, 22-1 Cheltenham, 23-1 Cheltenham, 24-1 Cheltenham, 25-1 Cheltenham, 26-1 Cheltenham, 27-1 Cheltenham, 28-1 Cheltenham, 29-1 Cheltenham, 30-1 Cheltenham, 31-1 Cheltenham, 32-1 Cheltenham, 33-1 Cheltenham, 34-1 Cheltenham, 35-1 Cheltenham, 36-1 Cheltenham, 37-1 Cheltenham, 38-1 Cheltenham, 39-1 Cheltenham, 40-1 Cheltenham, 41-1 Cheltenham, 42-1 Cheltenham, 43-1 Cheltenham, 44-1 Cheltenham, 45-1 Cheltenham, 46-1 Cheltenham, 47-1 Cheltenham, 48-1 Cheltenham, 49-1 Cheltenham, 50-1 Cheltenham, 51-1 Cheltenham, 52-1 Cheltenham, 53-1 Cheltenham, 54-1 Cheltenham, 55-1 Cheltenham, 56-1 Cheltenham, 57-1 Cheltenham, 58-1 Cheltenham, 59-1 Cheltenham, 60-1 Cheltenham, 61-1 Cheltenham, 62-1 Cheltenham, 63-1 Cheltenham, 64-1 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sport

SUPER BOWL XXX: Two second-half interceptions hand Dallas a third title in four years, Matt Tench reports

O'Donnell lets down Steelers

In the build-up to Super Bowl XXX it was suggested to Neil O'Donnell, who looks like the bassist in a country and western group, that if he shaved his beard off it might improve his marketability. He declined the offer, and perhaps it was just as well. As the game itself showed, it will take more than a trip to the barbers to turn the Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback into a superstar.

O'Donnell has endured more than his fair share of critics in six years with the Steelers, but as a key figure in their route to this year's finale his supporters argued that he had now done enough to be regarded among the sport's elite. His performance in Sunday night's showpiece in Tempe made the suggestion seem ridiculous.

O'Donnell crowned a desperately unconvincing display with the two interceptions that settled a compelling, if somewhat unsatisfying, Super Bowl. As a result the Dallas Cowboys won 27-17 to claim a third title in the last four years, but this was the least impressive of their recent triumphs and can only complicate, rather than settle, the debate surrounding the gifts (or lack of them) of their head coach, Barry Switzer.

Twice in the second half the Steelers fought their way back into a game that should have been beyond them, and twice O'Donnell hijacked their hopes. There are occasions when quarterbacks are unfairly blamed for ceding possession, but there can be no denying O'Donnell's culpability.

In the third quarter the Steelers' attack was threatening an equalising score when the Steeler playcaller threw a bewildering pass straight into the hands of the Cowboys' Larry Brown. There wasn't a Steeler within 10 yards of him. Brown returned the ball to the Dallas 18-yard line and a couple of plays later Emmitt Smith ploughed over to give the Cowboys a 20-7 lead.

Still the underdogs were not done, and with four and a half

minutes remaining they took possession on their 33, having cut the lead to 20-17. One of the great Super Bowl finishes seemed a possibility until O'Donnell again intimidated by a pass of blitzing Cowboys, once more found Brown. This time the Dallas cornerback made it to the seven, and Smith's second short-range TD ended the contest.

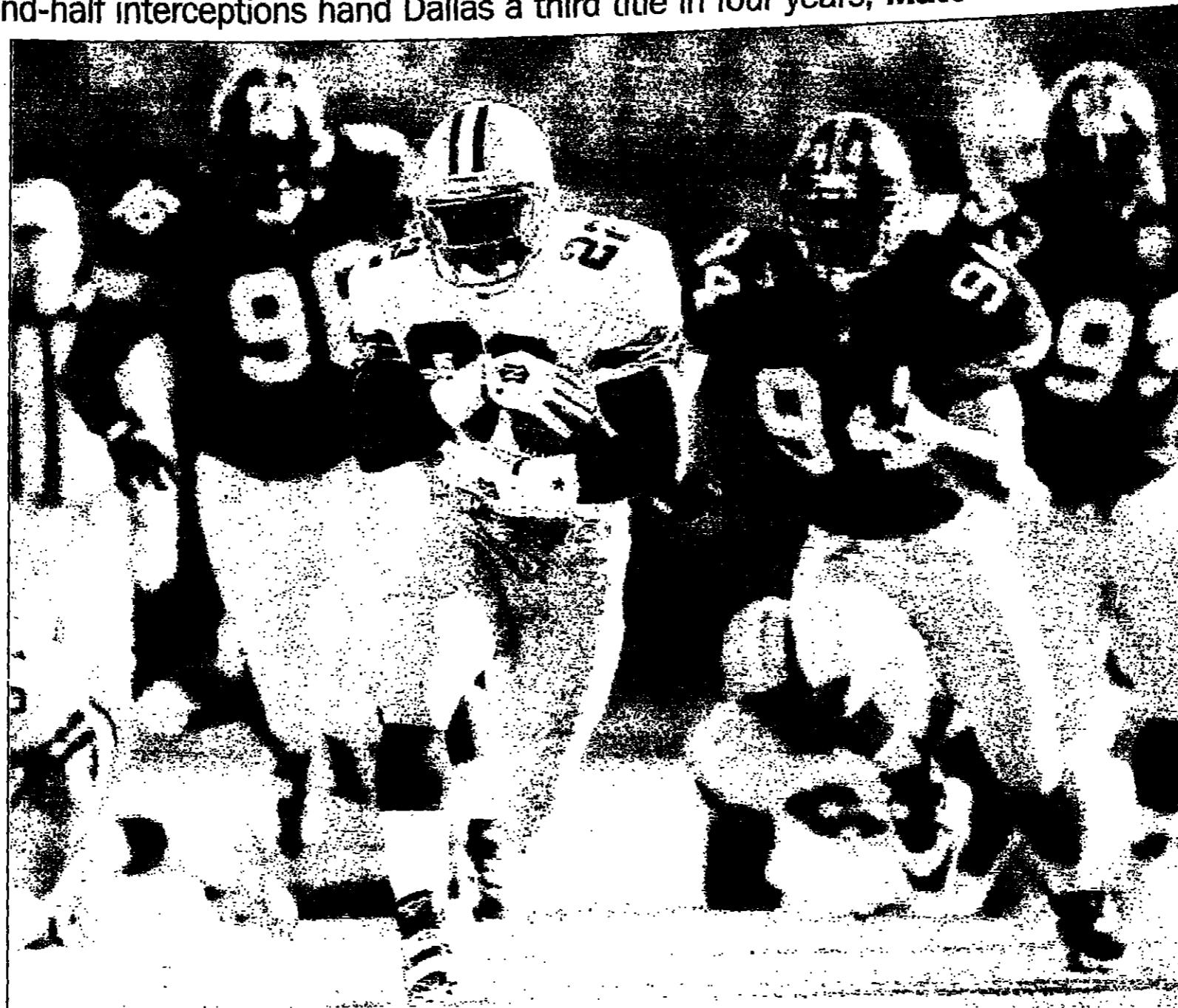
Bill Cowher, the Steelers head coach, was quick to console his quarterback as they left the field. "I told him to look at the big picture, not just this game. We wouldn't have been here without him," Cowher said.

All the same, O'Donnell's performance may prove expensive. His contract expires next month and with an annual income of \$2.8m (£1.8m) is one of the less well rewarded of a lucrative calling. An impressive year suggested it was time for him to join the \$4m club, but his unhappy Sunday may change all that, and could even persuade the Steelers to allow him to move elsewhere.

Certainly there was a stark contrast between O'Donnell's work and that of Troy Aikman, his Dallas counterpart. Faced with much the same sort of pressure, Aikman displayed characteristic poise in the pocket, either finding his man or throwing the ball away. His match return was a relatively modest 209 yards and cannot be said to have won the game. Crucially, he did not lose it either.

In a confusing and ultimately disappointing Dallas display Aikman's aplomb was probably the difference, but should not have been necessary. The Cowboys so utterly dominated the early stages that, for a while, it was difficult to see the game staying competitive until half-time, let alone the finish.

On his first carry Smith, freed by a block by Larry Allen on Greg Lloyd that should have carried its own assault charge, dashed for 23 yards. The Cowboys were no less successful



Contrasting fortunes: Emmitt Smith, pursued by the Pittsburgh defense (above) had, by his standards, a relatively subdued game even though he scored two touchdowns. Neil O'Donnell (below right) slumps in despair on the sidelines after his second interception cost Pittsburgh any chance of staging a comeback

Photographs: Reuter

through the air, with Aikman happy to locate the underneath receiver when the Steelers shut down the deeper options. By the end of the first quarter the Cowboys, clearly at home in Arizona, were 10-0 ahead and apparently poised for another rout.

That the Steelers were able to mount a response speaks much for their heart, and also some shrewd coaching adjustments. Projected as the Cowboys' inferiors in just about every regard, they began to thwart Smith, largely thanks to the efforts of linebacker Levon Kirkland. A scoring drive was limited to a field goal, and the next one, for the first time, produced a punt.

O'Donnell's indiscretions changed all that (though Sam

Morris's three-yard plunge kept the contest alive after the first one) but hardly alter the impression that the Cowboys under Switzer are considerably less threatening than under his predecessor, Jimmy Johnson.

Switzer has a reputation as a laid-back, players' coach, but it is difficult to imagine a Johnson team having to take a time-out when Pittsburgh switched to the no-huddle offense, muddling a kick-off or fluffing Pittsburgh's onside kick. Switzer's Cowboys did all three on Sunday, and also failed to make the most of their awesome attacking armory. (Smith rushed for just 49 yards.)

Naturally the Cowboy players entertained no such doubts as they rallied round their leader afterwards. "I'm proud of this team and I'm especially happy for coach Switzer," Brown said. "We owe this to the man."

Brown was voted the game's Most Valuable Player, an arguable award given that his two game-breaking interventions were straightforward plays that required no great skill. Aikman and Kirkland would have been worthy alternatives, but from a game lacking in outstanding individual efforts it was probably a fitting selection.

The choice of the game's least valuable player was presumably less difficult.



Neil O'Donnell

Wasps go back on road for Pilkington

Rugby Union

STEVE BALE

Wasps could afford a certain smugness at being the only side in yesterday's either/or Pilkington Cup quarter-final draw at Twickenham who knew for sure they were in the last eight, but this was wiped from their faces when they were presented with yet another away tie.

On 24 February, last season's beaten finalists must visit the winners of the Nottingham-Gloucester tie postponed with six others last Saturday.

With the Cup taking precedence over the league, these matches will cause wholesale First Division postponements by going ahead on 10 February when the Second, Third and Fourth will also be affected. If league position means anything, Wasps can expect to be at Kingsholm.

Wasps' fifth-round tie at Wimborne Park, a 57-0 reward for the tortuous six hours it took them to reach Cheshire from London last Friday, was the only one completed to schedule. This made it 800 miles of cup travelling already this season to add to the 1,600 of last season while they were en route to meet Bath at Twickenham.

Indeed, it is nearly three years since Wasps were last favoured with a home draw. Since that semi-final defeat by Harlequins they have ventured as far west as Exeter and as far north as Newcastle, where Quins still have to win to qualify for the doubtful pleasure of a quarter-final at Saracens or, more likely, Leicester.

Bath, the holders, will have a ferocious derby at Bristol if the West Country giants win at Wakefield and Bedford respectively.

The pursuit of anglophile foreigners willing to earn themselves some sterling picked up yesterday when Olivier Roumat, the outstanding French lock who reached the Currie Cup final with Natal during the South African season, was linked with Wasps where his compatriot Philippe Sella may also end up.

PILKINGTON CUP Quarter-finals: Leeds or London Irish v West Hartlepool or Coventry; Nottingham or Gloucester v Wasps; Leicester or Bath v Gloucester; Bedford or Bristol v Wakefield or Bath. Tie to be played on 24 February.

Questions of Sport

£40,000 to be won

Today we are giving you another sporting chance of an instant win. In Saturday's paper, there was a Questions Of Sport multi-choice scratch card which, if you answer three sporting questions correctly, gives you the chance of an instant cash prize from £1 to £1,000.

You don't have to be an obsessive fan to play - a good general sporting knowledge should suffice. But remember, you only get one chance to answer each question, so if you are in any doubt, check it out.

The card contains eight games so you can play daily through to Friday 2 February.

As well as the daily instant cash prizes there is a weekly accumulator prize of £5,000 to be won.

HOW TO PLAY

Today we are playing the section of the card dated Tuesday 30 January. Below are three sporting questions, each with three possible answers coded as A, B and C. Scratch off your answer to Question Thirteen, either A, B or C in the Q13 column then repeat for Q14 and Q15.

THE QUESTIONS

Q13 Who scored Everton's winner in last season's FA Cup final?

A: Duncan Ferguson
B: Daniel Amokachi
C: Paul Rideout

Q14 Which of the following players has not won the tennis Grand Slam (winning Wimbledon, the Australian, French and US Opens in the same year)?

A: Steffi Graf
B: Martina Navratilova
C: Rod Laver

Q15 Which country does George Weah, Milan's European Footballer of the Year, come from?

A: Nigeria
B: Ghana
C: Liberia

IMPORTANT

Scratch off ONE letter only for each question. If you reveal three identical cash amounts on any one game section on any one day, you win that amount. After you have played the last game on your card, total the cash amounts you have revealed. If your total is £5,000 you win or share the £5,000 accumulator prize. You could also win today's instant prize of £100 by revealing an asterisk.

If you have revealed three identical cash amounts of £5 or under, DO NOT PHONE. Take the claim coupon OR a piece of plain paper with your name and address on it PLUS the relevant section of the card to one of the newsagents listed below.

For prizes over £5, phone 01254 683666 (Ireland Republic 0044 1254 683666) between 10.30am and 4pm today.

Participating newsagents: WH Smith, John Menzies, Fortunys, Martins/R'S, McColl, Dilfons, Gibbs, Macs, Supercigs, United News Shops, Star News, K Balfour, Eason, GT News, Paperchain - Village Store, Paper Shop.

If you have any difficulty redeeming your card and coupon for a prize send both to: Independent Questions Of Sport claims, PO Box 60, Bunting, BB10 1SH.

RULES

1. No purchase necessary. Cards are freely available from newsagents or by sending a large s.a.e. to: Independent Questions Of Sport claims, PO Box 41, Blackpool X, BB2 6AG. One card per request.

2. The printed card game will be awarded to the player or players making a successful claim.

3. All claims are subject to scrutiny and cards must be returned to be eligible for a prize. Cards with postage paid will not be accepted.

4. Winners must agree to the publication of their names and photographs in The Independent and the Independent on Sunday.

5. Should more prizes be claimed than are available, the draw will be repeated on a random basis.

6. Persons under 16 years old, employees of Newspaper Publishing plc., Mirror Group, European Promotions Ltd., Newspaper Publishing plc, their agents and their agents and families are not allowed to play.

7. The Editors' decisions are final in all matters relating to the games. No correspondence can be entered into.

8. Newspaper Publishing plc reserve the right to stop the game at any time and change the conditions.

QUESTIONS OF SPORT CLAIM COUPON

Tuesday 30 January 1996

To claim prizes up to £5

DO NOT PHONE

Take this coupon to any of the participating newsagents listed who will give you your prize instantly.

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To the Newsagent: Please check the card is correct and give the reader the value of their prize. Send this coupon or details supplied on plain paper together with the winning card to your head office for full redemption.

London Marathon record

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

This year's London Marathon will be the biggest in the event's 16-year history. A record number of entries - 39,000 - have been accepted for the race on 21 April, of whom an estimated 27,000 are expected to finish.

The event is now at its limits in terms of participants, according to Alan Storey, the event's general manager.

"Taking the course into account - Cable Street, for instance, is only 13 feet wide - we are up to our maximum level as far as safety is concerned. Next year we will probably get an even greater number of entries, but this is the price of success."

Although no participating runners have yet been named, Dave Bedford, the event's international co-ordinator, forecasts a memorable race. "I believe this year's race will be of higher international quality than last year's and that of 1989," he said. "And I think most people agree that those were the best so far in international terms."

Meanwhile Flora, who have secured the event for the next three years, have put in a total of £50m towards their Marathon involvement this year.

There will be a number of new elements in the 1996 race, including a challenge to all professional football clubs north and south of the border to enter teams in club colours on a competitive basis. Over 100 clubs have accepted.

Elite runners, and others selected by the organisers, will have their progress charted through silicon chips worn on their shoelaces which will transmit information every time they cross special mats which will be placed at five-kilometre intervals on the course.

Chris Maddocks became the second Briton to win pre-selection for this summer's Olympic Games when he was named yesterday for the 50km walk. The 38-year-old, from Dawlish in Devon, will be competing in his fourth Games. The first athlete selected was Vicki Lupton in the women's 10km walk.

Britain on verge of excellence

Hockey

BILL COLWILL

sponded to my full satisfaction."

He added: "I have been very pleased with the players' attitude and strength. The pressure in a round-robin competition is very challenging, but we were unbeaten. We are potentially a very good team. We dominated every game at times but allowed some teams to come back at us. We do not finish as clinically as, say, the Dutch or the Australians, but we have time to work on that."

Certainly, there is a need for Britain to make more of the chances they create and too much reliance is put on the ability of specialist corner striker Calum Giles. The Havant striker again responded to the challenge, being second top scorer with eight goals in a total match time of just under 21 minutes.

With an unbeaten run of 17 internationals since the end of

November, the squad will now rest until the opening of the new Milton Keynes stadium on 24 March, when England were to play India. But following the announcement by the Indian coach, Cedric D'Souza, after the last game in Barcelona that India would send an under-21 side and ex-internationals, the Hockey Association president, Robin Elliott, said: "We have no interest in playing other than the full national squad. If that is the case, then we will look to get another country of equal quality."

Following the goalless draw between India and Malaysia, which was suspiciously lacking in commitment, the Canadian vice-president, Don Patterson, has lodged a complaint with the International Hockey Federation.

Starting on 5 August, as a temporary experiment, there will be no offside in hockey.

Millie keeps brothers at bay

Ice hockey

STEVE PINDER

kept their match tighter but the game was just as back and forth, with the score 4-4 at the end of the second period. With defence crucial in the third period, it looked as if Millie Blaisdell, the Nottingham player-coach, had taken the points with a goal two minutes into the period.

The Panthers defended en masse but, for the second week in a row, Newcastle's Scott Morrison decided the outcome of the match with a short-handed goal with minutes left for the 5-5 final score.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The golden age of Welsh rugby produced many flamboyant stars but also some solid, dependable ones, into which category Steve Fenwick falls. After a fine debut at Parc des Princes in 1975 - he scored a try, a conversion and a drop goal as Wales achieved a record 25-10 victory in Paris - the Bridgend centre went on to win 30 caps, a Welsh record for the position until last year.

Fenwick faced England seven times, losing only at Twickenham in 1980. He toured with the Lions in 1977 and twice won the Welsh Cup with Bridgend, dislocating a shoulder in the 1978 final but still being named man of the match for his 15 first-half points.

Away from rugby, Fenwick enjoyed success as a businessman. He quit teaching in 1977 to join Tom David, a fellow Welsh international, in forming Triple Crown Chemicals, an industrial supply company. The company has since been sold and is now part of the giant Repsol group.

Today Fenwick, 44 and married with two children, is chief executive of his former Bridgend club. It is a position unimaginable when he joined Cardiff's Blue Dragon

IN BRIEF
Black detective's
racism claim

go
on
or
ton

Who would have predicted that the crucial match of the Five Nations would be played at Murrayfield next Saturday?

Until recently I thought that, if you bought one of Rupert Murdoch's dishes, that was that: you could watch overseas Test cricket, a Courage league match or whatever took your fancy without extra charge. I now discover you have to pay a monthly fee of £25 or so as well.

"How naive!" you may say. Well, perhaps. But, if independent television brings you programmes for nothing (the hidden costs being included in the price of the goods advertised), I do not see why Mr Murdoch cannot do likewise.

I am putting off buying one of his dishes, and paying the monthly charges, for as long as I can. But, as soon as the Five Nations' Championship is on Sky Television and can be found nowhere else, I shall know

that I have lost the battle and that Mr Murdoch has won. At this point I shall have to acquire a Sky aerial and pay the fee.

Unless there is legislation, I cannot see any of the national rugby unions holding out against the financial temptations which Mr Murdoch will offer. Nor can I see the politicians passing legislation to frustrate his plans. So let us enjoy the Five Nations while we can.

A few weeks ago most observers expected France to beat England more easily than they did, and Ireland to defeat Scotland convincingly. Once again the competition has not let us down. The rugby may have been particularly glorious, either in Paris or in Dublin. The championship itself is more inter-

esting than many thought it would be. For who would have predicted that perhaps the crucial match of the Five Nations would be played at Murrayfield next Saturday? Of the eight most recent encounters between the two countries at Edinburgh (1980-95) Scotland have won all, France have won all the Paris matches except last year's. France narrowly defeated Scotland in the World Cup, but Scotland could easily have won themselves.

Scotland have once again come up with a pair of very good half-backs in Gregor Townsend and Brian Redpath. But if halves alone won matches, Scotland would have secured the championship more often than they have – four times since the last war. They have a marvellous runner in



ALAN WATKINS
on rugby

Townsend, but France have five potentially marvellous runners, for the enforced return of Alain Penalat strengthens the backs. Rob Wainwright, the Scottish captain, has

turned into a world-class forward, but for all their rucking strength the pack lack beef. Nevertheless their ground record favours Scotland.

Though we expected France to beat England more convincingly and less fortunately than they did, most people simultaneously thought Wales at Twickenham would present few problems to the home team. All of a sudden, and for no very good objective reason – the win over Italy is the only one that comes to mind – Wales are thought to be in with a chance. The popular theory is that they have the backs if only the forwards will provide them with the ball. The Thomases, Arwel, Gareth and Justin, together with Leigh Davies, are particularly mentioned. I am writing this before the an-

nouncement of the Welsh team. Of those just mentioned, only Justin Thomas at full-back is sure of his place. The prediction is that Kevin Bowring, the Welsh coach, will pressurise Neil Jenkins to Arwel Thomas at outside-half if he can persuade himself that Jenkins is fit. If another old hand, Nigel Davies, is picked in the centre, this leaves only one place alongside him for one of those new, exciting young backs about whom we have heard so much.

What it comes down to is the halved belief that Wales can beat anyone (even New Zealand on a good day) through native wit, quick thinking and sleight of hand. Historically, the only period during which the Welsh really matched the fond dream was the 1970s.

Since then, the game has changed, on the whole for the worse. As Bowring said in a recent interview, the laws encourage forwards to stand remorselessly up the middle of the field. To his credit, in a way, Geoff Cooke recognised this, and planned accordingly.

Jack Rowell is seeking a more expansive style and, so far, failing. Part of the trouble is simple. It is that most England players seem to find the greatest difficulty in giving a pass, and even more difficulty in taking one. Modern Welsh players are not exempt from this failing either, which I expect to see comprehensively displayed at Twickenham, with the outcome decided by the boots of Jenkins or Arwel Thomas and of Paul Grayson.

Adams the catalyst for change

Tom Chesshyre reports from the townships of Cape Town on the big impact made by the progress of South Africa's Test new boy

The only cricket pitch in Langa, a township in the suburbs of Cape Town, looks more like a neglected farm field. Clumps of grass in the outfield are almost knee-high and there are numerous sinister grapefruit-sized rat holes, which must have accounted for many a twisted ankle in their time.

"The ball bounces all over the place. It's not exactly the easiest ground to play on," said 15-year-old Barnsile Mbambani, an all-rounder with Langa Cricket Club, during a breather from an afternoon practice session. "It's almost impossible to hit a four through all the grass and it has been known for balls to be lost in the holes."

"It's not fair. Most white guys go to private schools with much better conditions than this. Some have at least two well-kept pitches as well as seven or eight practice nets. We only have two nets for practising."

Although South African cricket appears to be on a high after the Test win and the annihilation of England in the one-day series (there is a lot of talk of adding the cricket World Cup to rugby's biggest prize), there is a long way to go before the development at grass-roots level matches the success of the top flight.

The meteoric rise of Paul Adams, the teenaged spin bowler from a Cape Town township who bewitched England's

batsmen after just a handful of games, serves only to highlight the problems.

Adams' effect on young people in the townships has been galvanic. The reaction from a group of kids playing a mini-league match in the Cape Town township of Blue Downs when asked who their favourite player was, said it all. "Paul Adams!" they bellowed. One said: "We used to all want to play soccer, but now cricket is my favourite sport." Another added: "Cricket is definitely no longer a white man's sport."

The problem South Africa now faces is to move fast enough to capitalise on the wave of enthusiasm.

It is eight years since the first Cricket Board was formed to bring black and white cricketers together and help the development of young black players, but improvements to township facilities are slow.

Those fighting for better

conditions are feeling frustrated. "There are still a lot of conservative people around who are very resistant to change," said Rustie Maget, the Western Province Cricket Association's cricket development manager, said. "So we have to fight and fight and fight to give blacks an equal chance. Apartheid is over and the government has changed, but people's attitudes don't change overnight."

Special training sessions are held for the most talented young players in the hope of discovering



Top cap: Paul Adams is mobbed by fans at the South Africa v Egypt African Nations' Cup football game in Soweto

Photograph: Gary Prior/Allsport

Waugh completes rout as Boon bows out in style

Cricket
Australia 502-9 dec & 215-6 dec
Sri Lanka 317-4 & 252
Australia win by 148 runs

Steve Waugh inflicted a final telling blow upon Sri Lanka on their troubled tour of Australia by steering Australia to a crushing victory in the third Test in Adelaide yesterday.

After heavy defeats in Perth and Melbourne, the tourists were outplayed once again, losing by 148 runs with an hour to spare at The Oval. Chasing a daunting victory target of 401, Sri Lanka were dismissed for 252 in 96.2 overs to complete a 3-0 drubbing in the Test series.

Sri Lanka's fortunes contrasted sharply with the emotional scenes within Mark Taylor's jubilant side as the veteran batsman, David Boon, bowed out of Test cricket on a winning note.

"David is the senior player in the side and also a very good friend so his last game for Australia was the most emotional

moment during my time as captain," Taylor said. "David came into side in 1984 when the team was not doing well and he leaves the Australian side now as a winner. That is very important for the rest of the players."

Waugh, who was named player of the series at the close of play, claimed four crucial wickets on the fifth day to add to his century and unbeaten half-century earlier in the match.

(From PA Wire/Press Association)

AUSTRIA 200-4 dec & 150-5
SRI LANKA 170, 6; P. Waugh 72, 1; A. Head 70,
SRI LANKA - First innings 327, 1; P. Head 70,
R. Waugh 65, R. Matthews 56, P. Reiffel 5-36;
AUSTRALIA 200-2 dec & 150-2
Total 397, 1; P. Head 100, 1; P. Waugh 100,
SRI LANKA - Second innings 215 for 8 dec
(Overnight: Head 65 & Waugh 11)

1st Innings: C. Head & P. Waugh 11-11;
2nd Innings: C. Head & P. Waugh 65-65;

1st Innings: P. Matthews & R. Matthews 10-10;

1st Innings: P. Matthews & R. Matthews 1

United fined in FA clampdown over poaching

Football

GUY HODGSON

For a second time in less than three weeks, the Football Association clamped down on Manchester United's aggressive accumulation of young footballing talent yesterday, fining the club £20,000 for poaching a schoolboy from Oldham Athletic.

United, who escaped punishment when they were found guilty of an illegal approach to Arsenal's Matthew Wicks, were not so fortunate over David Brown, 17. In addition to the fine, they must also pay costs of the FA commission's hearing and agree compensation with Oldham. The eventual price could be as much as £100,000.

A spokeswoman for the FA, Claire Tomlinson, said United had fallen foul of Premier League rule 20.9. "The fine reflects the seriousness of the offence," she said. "We don't want any illegal approaches to schoolboys. Clubs spend a lot of money, time and effort on the development of their young players and we feel have to afford them protection."

Motherwell hope to avoid another blank

Satellite television producers are hoping that today's match at Motherwell will not leave them screening another blankly-blank. Motherwell play Aberdeen in the Tennent's Scottish Cup third round, with Sky Sports hoping to break four and a half hours of goalless action from Fir Park. They drew 0-0 in three televised games in 1995, against Hibernian, Hearts and Rangers.

Alex McLeish, the Motherwell manager, yesterday told his goal-shy players: "Cup glory can help our survival battle."

He is desperate to start a winning run after waiting 15 games for his side's last victory. An own goal by Joe McLaughlin of Falkirk last Tuesday lifted Motherwell above Falkirk on goal difference in the Premier League relegation battle.

Earlier this month United were reprimanded by the FA over Wicks - the son of the former Chelsea defender, Steve - but were spared punishment when the youngster decided to return to Highbury.

United, who have maintained their innocence in both cases, are considering an appeal concerning Brown and have asked for a clarification of the regulations. Maurice Watkins, a solicitor and club director who presented United's case to FA, said: "I don't think the rules are particularly clear and this was the point I was trying to make before the commission. We need to make it very clear that if a player takes a view that his career is best served elsewhere then, as long as proper compensation is payable, then he can be allowed to move."

It was a lucrative day for the FA's disciplinary arm because, in addition to United's fine, the Middlesbrough manager, Bryan Robson, was docked £750 and his players Neil Cox and Nigel Pearson £500 each after being found guilty of bringing the game into disrepute.

The charges related to incidents near the players' tunnel and dressing-room areas after the match at Blackburn on 16 December. All three were found guilty of making foul and abusive remarks to referee Paul Dawson after Middlesbrough's 1-0 defeat and warned about their future conduct.

There could be trouble looming too, for Ian Wright, who has been ordered to appear before a disciplinary committee to discuss remarks he made about referees on Arsenal's club-call telephone line. He allegedly described some officials as "little Hitlers". Arsenal's manager, Bruce Rioch, has apologised to the FA for his part in a touchline confrontation with the Newcastle coach, Terry McDermott, during a Coca-Cola Cup quarter-final at Highbury on 10 January. "Mr Rioch apologised, stressing in his letter that the incident was purely verbal and nothing else," an FA spokesman, Steve Double, said.

On the transfer front the wave of foreign imports appears likely to be swelled by the Brazilian international, Branco, who is in line to join his compatriot, Juninho, at Middlesbrough. He is valued at around £1m but Boro expect to get him for considerably less because the full-back holds his own registration. The club has applied for a work permit for him.

West Ham are also looking abroad, having made a £2.2m offer for the player described as Portugal's Ryan Giggs, Sporting Lisbon's Dani. The 18-year-old striker flies to London tomorrow to join the Hammers for the rest of the season with a view to a permanent move.

Newcastle United yesterday were still not responding to reports that the Colombian striker, Faustino Asprilla, had failed a medical, which has stalled his proposed £6.7m move from Parma. The Italian club's coach, Nevio Scala, insisted all was well. "It's nonsense to say he's carrying an injury... He has been in training and playing for me and I am not aware of any medical problems."

Wolves last night rejected a £3m offer from Coventry for Dean Richards, the England Under-21 defender for whom they paid Bradford City £1.8m last year.

Falconer arrived from Celtic a fortnight ago, but he is ineligible because he signed less than 14 days before 27 January, the scheduled date for the match before it was switched for television. John Hendry or Alex Burns will replace Falconer.



Clap hands: Arnold Palmer prepares for Jim Colbert's praise after a birdie during a skins game in Hawaii

**Beaten
Coltart
backed
to win**

Golf

Ian Woosnam may be the man of the moment again after his victory in the Johnnie Walker Classic, but he took the time yesterday to offer words of encouragement to the man he beat in the play-off in Singapore.

Andrew Coltart was the victim when Woosnam twice holed long putts on the 18th green on Sunday, one taking him into a play-off with the 25-year-old Scot, the other to win the title. Before heading off for the Heineken Classic, starting in Perth, Australia, on Thursday, Woosnam told Coltart: "I think you'll soon win, and if it's my consolation I hope you beat me in the next time we meet in a play-off."

Sunday's victory, worth £100,000, was Woosnam's 37th as a professional and took his earnings on the European Tour alone to nearly £4.3m. However, the timing of his triumph was the important thing to the former world No 1 as it was that it came just when people - and he himself - were wondering if he would ever hit the heights again.

His Japanese club sponsors, Maruman, did not renew their contract at the end of last season and Woosnam was worried about the state of his back. "I was thinking then that if my back was going to be like that for the rest of my life I didn't want to play."

At Tanah Merah, though, he was unrecognisable from the figure who had put two putters - one long, one short - in his bag in the second round of the German Open last August because he did not know the best way forward.

Woosnam has altered his swing and has been working with Colin Montgomerie's coach, Bill Ferguson. He also gave his back as much rest as he could in a 10-week lay-off prior to going to Singapore.

■ Raymond Floyd won five skins worth \$180,000 (£120,000) with a tap-in putt on Sunday and collected \$240,000 in all to win his third successive Senior Skins Game at the Mauna Lani Resort in Hawaii. Jim Colbert, the 1995 Senior Tour Player of the Year, won \$180,000, while Arnold Palmer picked up \$80,000 and Jack Nicklaus \$40,000.

Photograph: AP

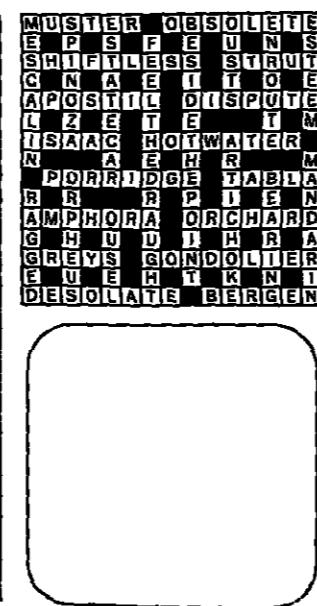
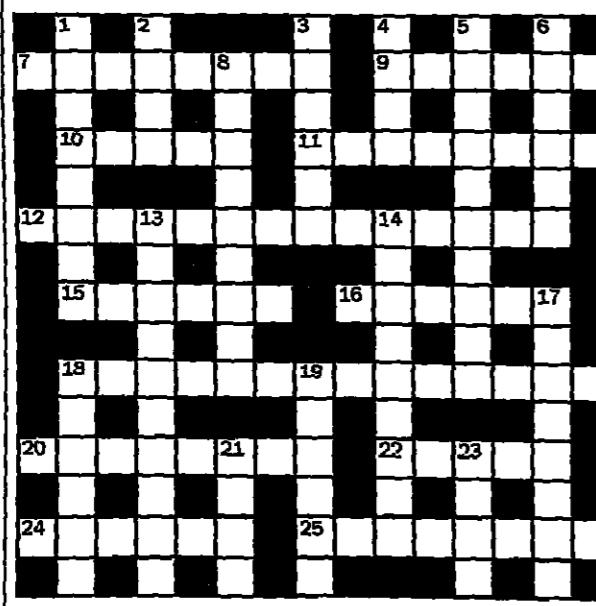
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD in association with



No. 2896, Tuesday 30 January

By Asred

Yesterday's Solution



- ACROSS
7 Perhaps Ned, at this, would have nothing to do? (5)
9 Account covers a US agency's growth (6)
10 Opera depicts love in development of acts? (5)
11 Deny it, it's wrong to be in unanimity (8)
12 One doesn't believe him to be an apostle (8)
15 Playing a harp I will be one excluded from society (6)
16 Not subject to poor man in Spain (6)
18 Engine could get one into Leeds with use of current (6-8)
20 To intimidate brother women use whip (8)

- 22 Some quite normal singer (5)
24 Binder's awfully weak in maki-up (6)
25 Sounding off I press horn hard seeing canine (3-5)

DOWN
1 Cajole into draft bit of TV? (4-4)
2 One US girl could be a goddess (4)
3 Moving slowly to extremity? (6)
4 In France the first person to carry publicity for stonc (4)
5 Equivalent to an army surrounding termite's hill? (10)
6 Interruption for a man getting about one Tuesday (6)

Win a Weekend Break or a case of Bombardier Premium Bitter

CALL 0891 311 017

When you have the answers to the first three clues across AND the first three clues down phone 0891 311 017 and leave your message with your name, address and daytime telephone number by midnight tonight. Each day there is a £100 prize for a Weekend Break for two in a Charles Wells Country Hotel. Calls cost 3p per minute cheap rate, 40p per minute all other times. Winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received. No cash alternative. Normal Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final. Winners' names can be obtained by sending an SAE to Charles Wells Crossword, Unit A, Bowes House, St Peters Road, Maidenhead SL6 7QU

BBC claims England v Scotland

GUY HODGSON

duction for BBC TV sport, said of the England v Scotland confrontation.

"It's a massive match, the focus of the opening round. I feel confident the game will attract a similar audience to the near 17 million who watched the 1990 World Cup semi-final between England and West Germany on BBC."

The contract for Euro 96, the biggest international sporting occasion to take place in England since the 1966 World Cup, was secured several years ago before BSkyB was able to flex its financial muscle. As a result terrestrial television will have a monopoly, acting as broadcaster both domestically and around the world.

ITV's head of football, Jeff Farmer, said: "We negotiated a sensible arrangement with the BBC and I am delighted with ITV's package." The event starts with England v Switzerland at Wembley on 8 June - which will screened by ITV - and reaches a climax on 30 June, when both BBC and ITV will cover the final live.

The BBC will have first choice of the quarter-finals when the competition reaches its knock-out phase but, if either Scotland or England reach the semi-finals, it is probable both TV companies will provide coverage. There will be no duplication of live games until the final stages and each broadcaster has the first option to screen highlights of matches they have not covered live.

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP Television schedule: BBC: 9 June Germany v Czech Republic, 10 June Portugal v France, 11 June Austria v Scotland, 12 June England v Italy, 13 June France v Spain, 14 June Portugal v Netherlands, 15 June France v Turkey, 16 June England v Scotland, 17 June Italy v Spain, 18 June Portugal v France, 19 June Spain v Italy, 20 June France v Germany, 21 June England v Netherlands, 22 June Portugal v Scotland, 23 June Italy v France, 24 June Spain v Germany, 25 June Portugal v Italy, 26 June France v Spain, 27 June Portugal v Italy, 28 June Spain v France, 29 June Portugal v Germany, 30 June Spain v Italy, 31 June France v Spain, 32 June Portugal v France, 33 June Spain v Italy, 34 June Portugal v Spain, 35 June France v Spain, 36 June Portugal v France, 37 June Spain v Portugal, 38 June France v Spain, 39 June Portugal v France, 40 June Spain v Portugal, 41 June France v Spain, 42 June Portugal v France, 43 June Spain v Portugal, 44 June France v Spain, 45 June Portugal 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